



Case Study template for Learning and Guidance Workgroup

A) General Part

General	
Case Study Title	Continuous education and practice at SEM
DIALOGUE thematic group	Learning and guidance
Date of the case study	Spring, 2011
Contact Information	Email: hanif@metu.edu.tr
Name of the institution	Middle East Technical University
Location/country	Ankara, Turkey
Size of the organisation/ Number of academic/research and non-academic/administrative staff	The administrative unit of the SEM consists of 8 academic staff, all full professors, one associate professor and one lecturer, and 2 research assistants, and non-academic staff.
Website	http://www.metu.edu.tr
Abstract	This case is based on evaluation of guidance and learning activities that take place at SEM (Continuous Education Centre, CEC) at Middle East Technical University from the perspective of multiple data sources. The case description is limited to three training programs, one of which has been offered over a decade through distance education means. The other training programs are selected for providing one example for a sustainable program and one for a newly established program as a request initiated by the industry.
Key words	Lifelong learning, adult education, continuous education
Please provide a short abstract of the case study	Middle East Technical University in Ankara is one of the first universities in Turkey to establish a Continuous Education Center. The center was developed in order to “develop the cooperation of the university with public institutions to, private sector, and international institutions via offering continuing education programs in the fields on which the university has excelled and is experienced, contributing to the development



of Turkish industry and progress, and carrying out such services to the international arena” (Arslan, 2008, p.140). It has been offering many programs that are submitted in classroom environments, off campus sites, or online means. The cases included in this report are drawn purposefully to reflect the diversity of the trainings offered that may be grouped according to the following criteria: Sustainability of a long-term offered training program, ICT based or Online trainings, and newly established training as an inquiry from the industry. More specifically, based on document analysis of official working papers at CEC, this report included a four-quarter program that has been offered over a decade through an online program on “Information Technology Certification Program”; one “Human Resources Management Certification Program” that is being improved every two year and is offered through constructivist and active learning environments in which the trainers act as guides and facilitators mainly; the final case is based on a newly developed training offered for the aviation sciences area interest groups. Details are collected on how a program initiates and how the **dialogue** between researchers and practitioners contributes to the improvement of the training offered for both parties. Based on findings, the author of this paper concludes that dialogue may vary from the type of training program to the type of area the service is provided. The concept researcher has been used interchangeably for the concept scientist throughout the paper.

B) Specific Part

The following part depends on each thematic group, outlining strengths and weaknesses of the chosen situations.

1. Context:

Please present the general background (“landscape of experience”) of the activity and in which institutions, organizations, units or sectors the case took place.



The Continuous Education Centre (CEC) at METU aims at offering services for the public and private institutions as well as international organizations to offer a space for continuous development and learning with the help of expertise academics in their field. It is hoped that this link and exchange between the practitioner and the researcher will enable economic or industrial development in the national and international arena. Under this purpose, in year 2010, the CEC provided 71 seminars in total. Fifty were special offerings based on contracts between CEC and the organization, 21 were open seminars for the public's interest. Fiscal reports showed that there was an increase of 4% of the seminars that were contracted and 61% increase of seminars open for the public's interest. Such increase based on supply and demand needs further in-depth evaluation, and programming for future services. Some of the contracted seminars were held under the following titles: Conducting recruitment interviews; climate change and adaptation policies in Turkey; Applied hydrograph training; Certification on health based knowledge systems; training the trainer and measurement and evaluation. Some of the seminars for public interest were family and marriage therapy, online natural disaster risk management, and firm valuation. Training programs may vary very much dependent on the area or subject matter. For instance, for the topic "Climate Change" a number of 42 field experts, policy-makers, or scientists gathered and offered a two-week training to graduates who were involved in the area. The trainers from diverse backgrounds offered invaluable enrichment to the development of the CEC clients as well as to contributing with reciprocal new insights to researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.

2. What are the objectives and purposes of the concrete action?

This case study has a dual purpose. First of all, it tries to evaluate the incentives of stakeholders in taking part in the activities of CEC, and understand if the transfer of learning can be observed as a behavior in the workplace or other space for contractors. Ultimately, it is aimed that through examining the availability of different learning environments it tries to explore proofs of evidence of how the dialogue between the researcher and the practitioner is set with through learning and guidance means. Secondly, some of the training programs or seminars are offered for public interest in which lifelong learning can be considered as a main guiding issue, therefore, a social training program also has been included in the case. Ultimately, this paper focuses on whether the learning and guidance enables LLL skills development, and how CEC administrative units act to meet an emerging training need and satisfy the dialogue through learning and guidance.

3. How does this activity combine insights from research and practical hands-on experience?

The 21st Century is based on a knowledge based economy and inevitably new trends and developments in industry and technology are growing rapidly. The complexities of these components create a space for new developments, innovation, productivity and quality improvement, and ultimately competition means through research. Despite CEC was established to offer services to pace with new developments for its practitioners, CEC offers services that are also of public interest as mentioned earlier. Thus, the learning society for a new economy is also undertaken as an essential component in enhancing a stable and healthy

improvement alongside technological and industrial development. Therefore, this case study provides the author with data on understanding how the services offered are transformed into practice and how they contribute to further LLL and development of the university graduates overall. Higher Education Law number 2547 deals with continuous education, under this Law Act 5 underlines that higher education institutions are organized as such so that they are responsible with the provision of formal, non-formal and continuous and open-education, and Act 3 highlights that Applications and Research centers within higher education institutions are responsible for the provision of application and research needs of diverse vocational areas, and be supportive for professional services through offering education and sustainable research in the area studied (Higher Education Council, 2007). Through examining one of the first CEC in Turkey, and their experiences on how it became a role model for other continuous education centers in the country may provide us with some deeper insights of the sustainability of such programs that may even be criticized for “learning paid” or the “paying society.”

4. Does the institution/sector/unit provide instruments (e.g. ICT or human resources) for the implementation of the concrete action? Which tools were applied?

Concrete actions are taken by experts at CEC to ensure the learning and guidance process for their participants/clients through administration of participant satisfaction sheets and reaction sheets after any training has been offered. All data collected from participants are confidential and are only shared with the trainer, whom may be the researcher, the field experts, or even the practitioners. Another concrete action can be that of the human resources offices or career centers that may propose the needs of certain topics and specialization and become mediators or facilitators of the activities to be conducted. Expert researchers are contacted to construct a training program. Since some of the topics may be new to practitioners, the researchers themselves may also offer proposals to CEC to draw the attention of stakeholders in both the public and private sector. ICT is an important component in the dissemination of training to wider groups that enables the researchers or trainers to go beyond the national scope and reach an international interest group in the certification program offered by an organization under the roof of a prestigious university and ultimately its academic staff. Another concrete action taken is the contract with advertising companies to attract a wider audience for the training programs for university lifelong learning.

5. Best practice/ Bad practice:

What kinds of results were obtained? What do you consider to be the innovative or interesting part of this concrete action?

What are the barriers (potential and effective) to the full implementation of this action and what are its benefits?

In which sense can this action be useful for DIALOGUE?

In this case study three main training programs for lifelong learning purposes are selected purposefully as a part of the case to be examined. The selection criteria was to undertake a course that has been sustainable since the establishment of the CEC at METU; second, a prestigious training program that

draws attention of international participants and is offered mainly through distance education means (online); and third a newly offered training program to ensure that all type of training programs are represented in a way, and all have a different nature of building a dialogue between researchers and practitioners through learning and guidance. In other words, the cases included in this report were drawn from 1) a long-term program that has been offered over a decade through an online program called IDEA, an online certification program for informatics and computer sciences; 2) a human resources management certification program offered since the establishment of CEC and has been subjected to change ever since the feedbacks received through satisfaction sheets; 3) a new training developed and offered for the military aviation sciences. All data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the program coordinators for each or document analysis of the official documents and randomly selected completed satisfaction sheets. In all cases the participants were either sent by their workplaces/companies to receive further education on the specific subject offered, or attended voluntarily for future aspirations and therefore had to afford financially the program for themselves. Among the intentions of individually participating clients, it was found that the most listed reason for attending the training programs at CEC was to use it as a springboard to other job possibilities, for self-development, and even a considerable few even attended the programs to receive training from well-known scientists/instructors of a university (METU) with high reputation.

Case 1

This lifelong training program is offered as an online course to serve mainly the ICT sector with a MTSP certification program for people with no engineering background, and is mainly involved in informatics sector. What is peculiar about this training program is that it has a very large audience for each certification program for about 150-200 per year, and includes 8 courses offered in 4 quarters. The initial course and the final course, in total 8 hours for two days, are offered in lecture classrooms by the scientists (instructors) in person on campus, the rest online. Learning happens through intensive course offerings of course materials, lectures, and PowerPoint presentations on-line. In addition, issue-related videos are also accessible. Guidance happens through feedback offered throughout the courses online, and teaching assistants are in charge to respond to participant questions, and problems related to the learning materials, or the compulsory project works. Student feedback and new developments are incentives for further improvement of the course, as well as feedback provided from data from end of Course satisfactory sheets.

The barriers that the coordinator recognizes for further development is the workload that the scientist need to bear, and which may be drawn back from the research time is an important issue. Second, the strict policy development process between the departments where the instructors/scientists come from. The actions taken to enhance learning and guidance is to include more teaching assistants for offering feedback to participants and monitoring their project work, especially in the final quarter.

Case 2

As mentioned above this case was offered since the foundation of CEC, and still retains its popularity. The training program is not only offered on campus area in Ankara, but is also offered off campus in different cities, especially Istanbul. The city Istanbul is important as there are many other CEC in universities in Istanbul there is a demand for the current one at METU for its high reputation throughout 14 years. The training program on human resources management initiated as a need by external stakeholders and the coordinator together with a set of other experts in the field gathered and conducted a needs analysis study, and developed the program. What is very peculiar about this training is that its curriculum is revised and improved every two year based on current trends in the field, participant needs and feedback, and applications observed by the instructors themselves. Learning happens through intensive courses in the area supported with theoretical and practical materials as

well as visual materials. The guidance happens through multiple case studies, and relevant simulations conducted in classes. Authentic issues collected with regard to human resources management from real practitioners become means for lifelong learning of new participants.

Barriers are more related to the scientists/instructors' time management issues between their own academic role at their departments, and research issues. The coordinator stated that barriers for more research were overcome through collecting first-hand data from practitioners and this enabled them with knowledge of what went on in the actual work-place so that they could narrow the gap between theory and practice as an action taken. Other barriers mentioned was that the advertising of the training program did not occur through snowball sampling only but also through a private advertising company. Therefore, the training program had to be offered when the number of participants was at a required level such as 20 persons for a group. This however, could be a burden for the scientist/instructor as it could restrict or limit their research needs. Although lasting actions could not be taken yet, the scientists suggest a fixed date for training programs in which participants would be likely they attend based on the CEC policy rather than their personal choice of period.

Case 3

The newly established training program was an inquiry from the defense industry for training of a certification program related to aviation sciences and military aircrafts. Participants were mainly from the defense industry as well as other industries dealing with air forces. The program was developed based on a needs assessment study for an intensive two-week program on campus at CEC. Most of the participants had engineering backgrounds and were employed in different positions ranging from novice employees to top managers. Also, there were volunteer participants who afforded their fee themselves, and used the training as a lifelong learning process from instructors/scientists with high reputation in their fields. The learning was created through establishing intensive lectures for each topic included. Essential course materials were disseminated to the participants, and learning was measured through a challenging examination. Guidance occurred throughout the sessions. Mainly guidance was provided in relation to a project a participant was conducting in his/her work place. The scientists/instructors were considered as consultants for the problems participants faced in their companies' project in this case. As for the barriers mentioned by the coordinator, these were mainly linked to understanding the needs of the participants, and differentiating between university student learning and adult learning. Therefore, the scientists/researchers plan for improvement of course materials more related to current issues and applications in the area rather than intensifying on theory-driven knowledge.

Consequently, the three cases examined are good examples of lifelong training programs. Learning and guidance are relevant to the subject matter undertaken. The learning environment provides the practitioner with expert guidance on small applications in their workplace, and reciprocally, the researcher is familiarized with potential authentic small applications and can use these to improve the structure of their sessions at the CEC as well as use those samples with their own academic classes and fill the gap that may exist between theory and research. The researcher can conclude that there is evidence that actions taken are fully related to dialogue as the cases are evidence for a dialogue between the practitioner and the researcher as well as the larger society as it is also regarded as a continuum for the public's interest. Thus, industrial and technological development as one component for learning and guidance provides opportunities for several sectors including public service such as human resources development as a social development opportunity for a healthy company and ultimately a society where research, practitioner and citizens are combined through a dialogue.



6. Are researchers and practitioners directly linked in this activity?

- If yes, how are they linked and what are the communication and interaction processes?
- If they do not communicate directly, how are findings from research connected to practical activities and vice versa?

In this case study it was found that researchers and practitioners are directly linked to this evaluation or perhaps validation of LLL process. Yet data are only feasible from the researchers, in other words, the coordinators of the program. It is essential to see that although researchers may have drawn back a little from the research area, the dialogue between the researcher and the practitioner enables a lifelong learning process in which both parties may benefit equally. In the sample cases explained above, it can be deduced that researchers learn from practitioners what goes on in the work arena, or work places after student graduate and become employed. It provides the researcher with a wider vision of what new trends are available and how they can reflect on those with their own follow up research or their role as an instructor in academic classes. The communication occurs via, class interactions, postings on distance education means, or through project work, and activities conducted during or even after the training program offered. The researcher personally believes that the dialogue created between the researcher and the practitioner will be reflected on undergraduate students' visions and applications as these actions can be recognized as tools for career guidance.

7. Which elements would you identify as easily transferable to other institutions in different regional and national contexts?

Since the case study is based on program evaluation through an eclectic perspective, all elements of this study including the actions can be transferable. In other words:
*How learning and guidance is offered can be examined under the roof of a public university for R&D processes as well as for public interest.
*How the researcher takes actions in the evaluation of the training programs can be a model for other institutions and universities that highlight lifelong learning or continuous education in their institutions both at a national and international level.

8. Recommendations for dissemination:

Briefly identify the most important points in the case study for other ULLL managers and practitioners – these may include risks as well as benefits.

Please formulate some recommendations for the dissemination on the basis of the case study addressed to the working group and other partners.

ULLL managers and practitioners should consider adult learning itself as a component on how it should take place and how adults should acquire those LLL skills. "Training the trainer" is an essential component that needs to be emphasized if the practitioners are supposed to share their learning with other personnel in their workplace. In other words, stakeholders are interested in transferring knowledge into their workplace, guidance in CEC should not only be through knowledge-based or skills-based practices but also by considering the authentic experiences collected from practitioners should be means for improving the programs through creating alternative learning environments in which the



practitioners can actively involve themselves.

As such, a true dialogue can be established among all stakeholders, which may ultimately serve the dissemination of DIALOGUE. Figure 1 summarizes the outputs of assessment of three training programs at CEC

9. Additional information. E.g. bibliography, website, publications, reports

Arslan, M.M. (2008). Structure and Functions of the Continuing Education Centers at Turkish Universities. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 9(3), 138-148.

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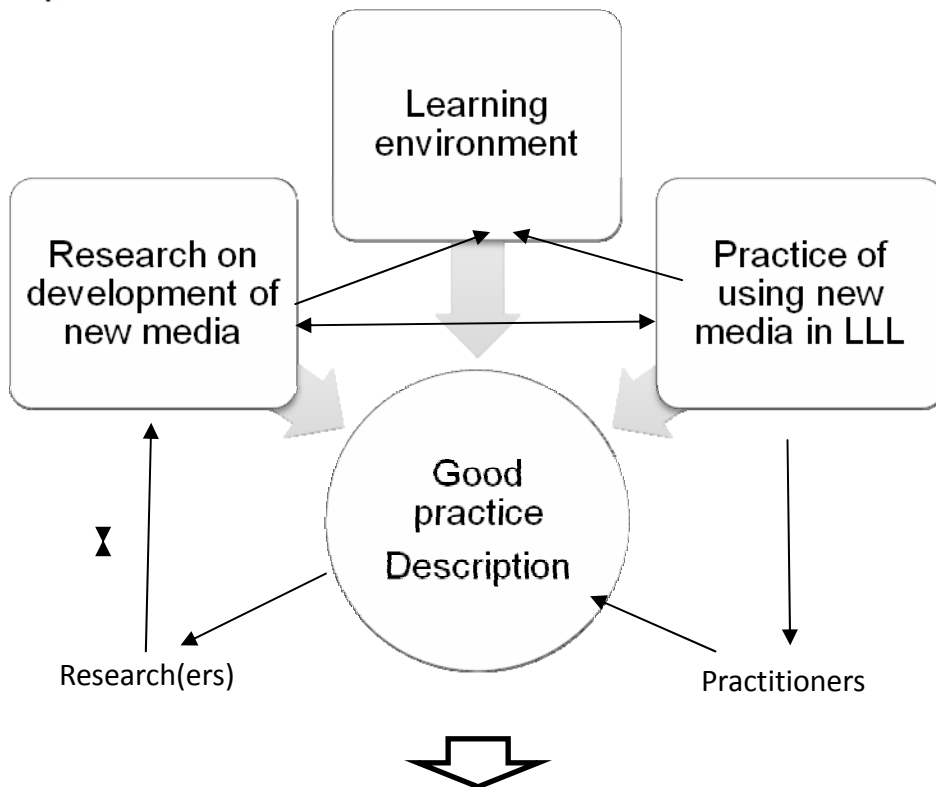
We are intending to put your case study on the website.

Please tick here if you do **not** wish to see your case study published on the project's website

ANNEX I

Example: New Media TWG. (How to connect virtual and physical space?).

The visualization of the dialogue between the researcher and the practitioner is based on the following interactions.



How it is possible to realize a DIALOGUE?

Practitioners are well-equipped with practical, hands-on experience, however, there are conditions that the practitioner is congested in the work they deal with or sometimes may not keep pace with the rapid knowledge changes. In such condition they need guidance and learning through new methodologies in the area they seek ULLL opportunities. Researchers, or scientists help practitioners with the building on the knowledge the practitioners need. The dialogue occurs, when researchers and/or scientists receive the authentic practices available in the workplace with regard to the knowledge they work on for research and development purposes, and when they recognize the difficulties, deficiencies or other gaps that may not have appeared in their congested laboratory contexts. Here the researcher comes in with two alternatives: one, new ideas for R&D that may contribute to new theory-building or knowledge-development through practices in the field. Two, the researcher helps the practitioner cope with the deficiencies they came across through new knowledge. Ultimately, such exchange or knowledge building contributes to the improvement of knowledge.

Consequently, dialogue is realized through reflections on practice.