

Librar-e Turkey: Preliminary Evaluation of Citizen Training Activities

Gülten Alır¹ Orçun Madran² Göknur Kaplan Akıllı³ and Seda Öz⁴

¹Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Ankara, Turkey

²Hacettepe University, Ankara Turkey

³Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

³Hacettepe Technopolis-Technology Transfer Center, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract: Accessibility to information and communication technologies (ICT) by all segments of the society improves the quality of people's life and promotes the sustainable development. Even though it is necessary to provide access to hardware and software for the society is necessary in terms of overcoming the digital divide, it is not enough. Bringing ICT literacy to individuals, overcoming their prejudices towards technology and helping them to gain self-confidence are important issues that need to be dealt with. Since public libraries have a large service scale that includes meeting the information needs of citizens, supporting individual efforts for lifelong learning, improving the reading culture, and helping to gain information literacy skills to individuals, they need to be transformed into active information centers with creative services that provide open access for public to ICT along with training spaces and activities.

Librar-e Turkey Planning and Pilot Implementation Project (LT-PP) is a social innovation project that aims to transfer public libraries into community and attraction centers. The Project has been carried out with the co-operation of Hacettepe Technopolis-Technology Transfer Center, Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Libraries and Publications, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries Initiative. For the pilot implementation there are 78 public libraries, which are planned to be transformed. With the help of the data that will be collected, results, and experiences that will be gained from the pilot project, a county plan will be created which will help to the transformation of all public libraries in Turkey.

The aim of the LT-PP Training Workgroup is to plan, develop, and implement ICT training programs and make them sustainable. The target audience of the training implementations is especially the disadvantaged facet of the society such as housewives, elderly, disabled, and unemployed people. Training activities which is maintained by the LT-PP has two main stages. First stage includes library staff trainings, thus, a program called "Training of Trainers" has been designed in which there are ICT courses, training and instructional methods and this curriculum has been taught to the library staff. With this stage, improving the ICT skills and bringing the lifelong learning abilities to the library staff has been aimed. Second stage of the training activities is the training of citizens. In this stage, citizens' participation to e-government applications, gaining lifelong learning abilities and ICT skills has been aimed.

This study covers some of the results of the first six months of citizen trainings which started in June 2014, in 78 pilot libraries and included basic ICT, basic Internet, e-government services, web design, cloud computing, office software, CV preparation, use of social media and e-mail trainings. By December 2014, most common training programs in the pilot libraries were based on basic computer (28%) and Internet (%27) trainings. At the end of these trainings 64% of participants declared that they would like to participate again other training programs that will be delivered in the library. Participants also demanded almost 40 different training programs from the libraries such as foreign language, Internet banking and photography.

Training activities and programs carrying out by the public libraries are still continuing and all the training materials that have been used in the pilot implementation are available on a distance learning platform called "UZEM" with CC license.

Keywords: Public Libraries, Turkey, Librar-e Turkey, ICT Training, Citizen