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Acquaintance with profession: Using internship as a tool for hearing-impaired university students

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Abstract

Vocational education is an important stage of one's educational process and this multi-layered process prepares an individual to his/her future profession. It is underlined that in this process, a hearing-impaired individual has problems to plan and manage his/her career, due to many reasons, like; communication difficulties in workplaces and lack of recognition about hearing-impaired as a category of disability in work environments. Internship is one of the important opportunities to acquaint with the profession and its effective use in vocational education of hearing-impaired students is significant. In this study, internship is handled as an integrated process which covers before, during, and after activities as a whole. The research aims at effective use of internship in the familiarizing process of hearing-impaired senior students of Anadolu University, School for the Handicapped (SFH) with work places. The research was conducted as action research. For efficient use of internship process in SFH, some steps were defined targeting before, during and after periods of internship and various sub-activities were planned and applied for strengthening each step and for effective contribution of internship experience to vocational education. The research indicated that through the activities, performed in internship process, hearing-impaired students improved their career perceptions and they had attempted to recognise work environments. The research results are expected to provide a new perspective to teachers of hearing-impaired students and consultants, who are working for the formation of vocational education programs of the hearing-impaired and also it is thought that the results will provide huge motivation to hearing-impaired students in the familiarizing process with the profession.

Keywords: Hearing impaired, action research, vocational education, special education, career planning.

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1. Introduction

Education is an important right granted to individuals and for contributing to their cultural and societal development. Education is a process, which also involves preparing for a profession from childhood to adolescence. In this preparation process, one decides for a profession interacting with his/her education, environment, and family and gets appropriate education according to his/her decision (Boutin, 2009; Dogan, 1997). In today's education, it is accepted that vocational education and general education complement each other. After the completion of vocational education, individuals are expected to gain necessary skills and proficiency to satisfy the expectations of work environments. This plays a substantial role for work placement (OECD, 2010; SCANS Report, 1991). Also prepared vocational training programs for hearing-impaired must reflect the objectives of vocational education. One of the important steps of vocational education is higher education (university level education) (Adem, 1977).

2. Career and Career Planning

Career means a lifetime progression process of an individual for the decided profession (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). It provides identity and social status (Simsek & Oge, 2011). Other notions related with the concept of career can be listed as follows; career planning, career management, career development, career path, career mobility (Aytac, 2005). Career planning is a process, which involves goals, duties, and the future of an individual's lifelong profession. On the other hand, career development involves activities to reach career plans (Aytac, 2005; Isaacson & Brown, 2000). The individual is placed on the very center of the concept of career and career development and formation of an individual keeps going throughout his/her lifetime.

It is a necessity to have a career plan for an individual in a vocational/professional education process or for a graduate. Researchers underline that normal hearing and hearing-impaired students in vocational/professional education process remain insufficient in relation to their career planning efforts. The main reasons, which are defined in literature, can be listed as follows; employment problems in today's business world, unemployment problems and problems faced by disabled people in their work environments. Because of these kinds of problems, both normal hearing and hearing-impaired youth have difficulties in making their career plans and they think that just finding any job is enough for them (Akoglan-Kozak & Dalkiranoglu, 2013, Dursun & Aytac, 2009; Sarikaya & Khorshid, 2009; Tektas, 2014; Yilmaz, Dursun, Pektas & Altay, 2012).

Studentship period is one of the first stages of career planning and efforts made in this process are important for career planning. Performing career planning activities with students in the education process will help to make their future plans more realistic (Sharf, 2002). Improving career awareness of students is a requirement. For this reason, it is important to involve issues related to career in curriculum and course content.

Acquaintance with the work environments and career planning based on these experiences are also important factors for career planning. One of the important opportunities to familiarize work environments and to gain experience is internship process and it should be utilized in the best way. Using the internship stage for aiming at familiarizing with work environments will be helpful for students in many ways; getting information about actual work places, understanding necessary knowledge and skills to be used in there and making career plans based on actual requirements and conditions of work places. In addition, internship provides an important educational setting that gives students an opportunity to see how much a career plan overlaps with work place requirements.

3. Research Goal and Importance

Examining national and international literature indicated that research about vocational education and career awareness of hearing-impaired is limited. Related studies also underlined that hearing-impaired individuals necessitate a systematic and intense support for their career planning, since their

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limitations in language and communication skills (Akoglan-Kozak & Dalkiranoglu, 2013; Borwn & Brooks, 1991; Dursun & Aytac, 2009; Isaacson & Brown, 2000; Sharf, 2006; Watts, 2001). Anadolu University, the School for the Handicapped (SFH), is an institution that provides university level education for hearing-impaired students in Turkey. Considerable number of research is conducted in SFH on vocational education of hearing-impaired, most of which tend to cover content and methods of ongoing education (Derican, 2010; Karasu, 2011; Kaya, 2012; Uzuner, Girgin, Girgin, Erdiken, Karasu, Kaya, Cavkaytar & Tanridiler, 2011). In addition to this body of research, it can be said that preparing hearing-impaired students to graduation and monitoring them in work environments are the issues that also require significant attention. There is need for guiding hearing-impaired students to make effective career plans. There is also need for widening of the outcomes of this research.

Based on the idea that real life experiences provide situated and integrated knowledge both for normal hearing and hearing-impaired students, this research aims to improve “internship” process of SFH students, as an early real workplace experience.

It is expected that the results of the research will contribute to SFH’s curriculum and to reconsideration of programs. Also, it may provide a valuable perspective for vocational education institutions and teaching staff. At the same time, this research on effective use of internship in SFH is expected to give hearing-impaired vocational education and university level students a point of view on familiarizing with work places and how effectively they can use internship process. Beyond these, the research is the first study, which aims to improve career awareness of hearing-impaired students, in its field in Turkey.

In the research, the following questions have been asked in order for the students of SFH to familiarize themselves with work places and use internship process effectively;

1. How is the effective usage of internship process performed?
2. What are the sub-activities and how are they performed?

4. Research Design

In relation with the goal of the research, the study is designed as an action research. Action research is a kind of research, which is done to understand social problems and to solve problems (Ferrance, 2000; Patton; 2002).

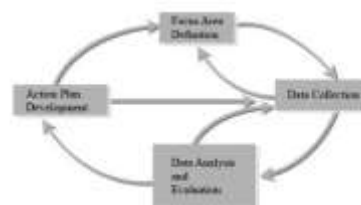


Figure 1. Dialectical cycle of action research (mills, 2003)

Practice is placed in the center of the action research. Qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques are used in action research to solve problems (Cresswell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Cyclical models are used in action research in order for defining a problem, collecting data in relation to a problem, evaluating collected data, and making improvements. In these models, participants share their opinions, knowledge, and solution proposals during the process. In this way, to reach research objectives, new action researches are designed (Mills, 2003; Henning, Stone & Kelly, 2009). One of the examples for cyclical process of action research is shown in Figure 1 (Mills, 2003).

Pilot study of the research was conducted with Architectural Drafting Program (fall semester) and Computer Operator Training Program (spring semester) in 2014-2015. Based on this data set,

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implementation data was collected and the process was defined in this research. This study aims to present one of the parts of the research; “internship process,” which provides students with the very first work place experiences.

4.1. Research setting

SFH, where the research is conducted, is the only institution that provides university level education for hearing-impaired students in Turkey. It was established in 1993. It aims to support hearing-impaired students to participate with society as productive individuals, and to provide Graphic Arts, Ceramic Arts, Architectural Drafting, and Computer Operator Training Programs (School for the Handicapped, 1993). 50 dB sensory-neural type hearing loss on the best hearing ear is the minimum level entry condition of the school for hearing-impaired students. SFH curriculum provides two complementary course groups for each program; one involves vocational courses and the other involves supplementary language courses. In addition to these groups, there is a special level course; Professional Language, which is described to support vocational courses, focusing on language and terms, used in a related profession. The research was decided to conduct in SFH, since there is an opportunity to use Professional Language courses to involve career planning activities for each program and the researchers work there.

In the research process, the data was collected from 12 courses in spring and fall semesters of 2016-2017 school year. One computer laboratory and four language classrooms were used for focus courses (Figure 2). These classrooms had sound insulation in relation with the needs of hearing-impaired students (Girgin, 2006).



Figure 2. Laboratory and classrooms, which were used in the research

4.2. Participants of the research

Student participants of the research; they were senior students of Graphic Arts, Computer Operator Training, and Architectural Drafting programs in 2015-2016 school year. They were between 24-27 years old. Since there were no students registered in senior class of Ceramic Arts program, it was not included in the research. All of the students had bilateral profound sensory-neural hearing loss. Only one student wore a cochlear implant. The method of whole communication was used in classes. Also writing on the board and using gestures were used to provide clues for students. Students were informed about the research aim and the process, publication of findings and that they were free to participate or leave the research (Biber & Leavy, 2011; Ryen, 2011; Stake, 2010). Related information about students’ age, hearing loss, etc., was shown in Table 1.

Researcher Team; the team was comprised of three instructors, who conducted focus courses, an internship coordinator and an advisor. They have around 20 years of experience both in their professions and in the education of the hearing impaired. The internship coordinator is an instructor, who is responsible for internship process. She also followed focus courses and participated in related activities. The advisor has 35 years of experience in the education of hearing-impaired students and in the education of teachers of hearing-impaired. He is an instructor, who controlled the trustworthiness of the research in relation to the field of study. Except the internship coordinator, all researchers participated in the action research projects, doctorate studies and they have academic publications in

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the field. Their works were presented in national and international congresses and published in academic journals.

Table 1. Information about students

Program	Student	Age	Hearing Loss dBHL
Graphic Arts	Yılmaz	25	120
	Uyar	23	112
	Tansug	25	112
	Kara	24	92
	Beyazit	25	88
	Ateş	30	78
	Ayaz	22	Cochlear Implant
	Şeker	23	105
	Bilen	25	85
	Ersuz	24	78
	HYılmaz	24	70
Computer Operator Training	Dincer	20	110
	Acar	23	70
	İlter	23	79
	Öztop	23	113
	Daldaban	22	107
	Özkan	25	83
	Göktaş	25	96
Architectural Drafting	Uguz	22	107
	Işık	21	67
	Karataş	20	120
	Sungul	38	107
	Kuş	22	78
	Artuş	22	113
	Guzel	22	120
	Can	25	95
Dursun	26	110	

5. Data Collection and Analysis

In the process of research, qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and techniques were applied. Research data was collected through class observations and video recordings, audio recordings and reports of research meetings, course plans and reflections, products of students, documents, interviews, e-mail and Facebook messages. Advisor's opinion was retrieved for trustworthiness of the data collection tools. Data collection and analysis were performed concurrently. With the objectives of the research and based on the decisions, took in research meetings, research data was analysed in a systematic and cyclical way and reflectively.

6. Findings

In this part, findings are presented in relation with the research questions.

6.1. How is the effective usage of internship process performed?

In SFH, "Professional Language," "Language Arts," and "Turkish Language Practices" courses were involved in curriculum to support the terminology and content of vocational courses and to support

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daily language and reading and writing skills. During the research process, two instructors, who were the field experts, planned sub-activities of internship process with the defined major issues in “Professional Language” courses. Language support study of these courses was done in language courses. Because of language limitations, hearing-impaired students required more repetition, examination of issues in meaningful contexts, and association of newly learned information with previous ones compared to their normal hearing peers.

Pilot data of the research was collected only from “Professional Language” courses in 2014-2015. In this process, research was conducted with senior students of Architectural Drafting in fall semester and with senior students of Computer Operator Training in spring semester. In light of the data, collected in pilot study, it was decided that involving language courses to the research will be more effective for understanding internship issues by students.

Research data was collected from all programs, which had senior classes, with the support of new activities in 2015-2016 school year. For this reason, the content of “Professional Language” courses of senior classes were reorganized with “Career Planning” studies for both fall and spring semesters. In addition, in each semester, the content of language courses, which supported vocational courses, were reorganized and through this “Professional Language” courses were made more effective. These reorganized courses were the focus courses of the research process. Table 2 shows the focus courses, in which internship activity took place.

Table 2. Focus courses

Program	Course	Term
Graphic Arts	Graphic Arts Professional Language VII	Fall
Computer Operator Training	Computer Operator Training Professional Language III	Fall
Computer Operator Training	Computer Operator Training Individual Language Support III	Fall
Architectural Drafting	Professional Language III Architectural Drafting Language Arts III	Fall

The cycle of Internship activity process is shown in Figure 4. The internship activity was performed with simultaneous and sequential sub-activities (Table 3).



Figure 4. Internship activity process

In the Internship activity process, weekly meetings of trustworthiness committee were held at six times, between September 30 and November 18, 2015. Researchers were planning activities and sub-

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activities in relation with the internship process and made evaluations and plans for the next week's courses. Individual plans of researchers were shared with trustworthiness committee and took the final form. After the completion of activities, researchers evaluated their courses and the process individually and prepared for the next trustworthiness committee meeting. During the whole process of research, literature reviews were made continuously and evaluations were reflected in the courses.

6. 2. What are the organized sub-activities and how are they performed?

Internship studies were organized under four main headings, which are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Internship activity process

Sub-Events	Explanation
<i>Internship Stories</i>	Expressions of students' internships with Power Point presentations and their presentations to the whole school
<i>Internship Directive</i>	Reorganization of Internship Directive of SFH (based on conducted research)
<i>Internship Coordinator</i>	Definition of a new position to support SFH students before, during and after the internship (based on conducted research)
<i>Internship Training Presentations</i>	Informative presentations of Internship Coordinator and students

Internship Stories: Based on the inferences coming from the pilot study and the decisions made during trustworthiness committee meetings, it was decided in the research process that the first sub-activity of Professional Language courses was "Internship Stories" (30/09/2015 dated meeting report). It took seven weeks to study Internship Stories sub-activity. The main tasks involved in Internship Stories activity is shown in Table 4.

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Table 4. The process of internship stories

Tasks	Explanation	Course	Date
<i>Writing of Internship Stories</i>	The homework, which asked students to write their internship process and experiences was given	Professional Language courses	7-9/10/2015
<i>Revision of Internship Story texts according to 5W1H</i>	Students were asked to write their internship texts according to the technique of 5W1H and the texts were revised by the students with the support of researchers	Professional Language and Language Arts courses and Internet (e-mail)	Computer Operator Training (10-16/11/2015) Graphic Arts (6/11/2015) Architectural Drafting (15/11/2015)
<i>Effective Presentation Techniques</i>	Explanation of effective presentation technique to the students by researchers as Power Point presentation and formation of Effective Presentation Table	Professional Language courses	11-13/11/2015
<i>Preparation of Internship Stories according to effective presentation techniques</i>	The homework, which asked students to prepare Internship Stories texts as Power Point presentations according to effective presentation techniques.	Professional Language courses	11-13/11/2015
<i>Feedback to Internship Stories Presentations</i>	Feedback given to the class presentations of Internship Stories	Professional Language and Language Arts courses	17-19/11/2015
<i>Presentation Rehearsals</i>	Class evaluation of Power Point presentations according to content and Effective Presentation Table	Professional Language courses and between classes	11-19/11/2015
<i>Internship Stories Presentations for the whole students of SFH</i>	Final presentations of focus course students to all students of SFH (Figure 5)	Professional Language and Language Arts courses	20/11/2015

Other sub-activities in focus courses were performed simultaneously, during the end of Internship Stories activity.



Figure 5. Internship stories presentation

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Internship Directive: It was inferred from the observations, during the pilot study, from the information, received from Student Affairs Office of SFH and from 20 years' experience of research team in SFH, that students had problems about internship process; they didn't have enough information about internship, the process of internship was not effective enough and they didn't know how they report their processes. There were informative studies of SFH administration, but it was defined that they remained discontinuous. During September 2014, there was a revision study about internship directive all over the university. One of the researchers participated in this university level study. Updated SFH internship directive was approved by Anadolu University Internship Commission, in December 2014.

With the new organization and additions to facilitate students, and with the contribution of research team, internship directive of SFH was reorganized in 2016 and still used (EEYO Internship Directive, 2016). Internship directive is an important document for students to take advantage of internship, make use of internship process effectively, and systematic evaluation of these studies.

Internship Coordinator: Required studies were planned by the research team for effective management of internship process. In the pilot study, the decision that there was a need for an advisor for the students to provide information and to monitor students before, during and after their internship was taken. For this reason, one of the researchers from the team was commissioned as "Internship Advisor" by the approval of the school director, in 06/10/2015. During this period, it was decided that the internship advisor should learn sign language, and then she got training and a certificate for sign language. The job description of internship advisor was made during the restructuring of internship directive of SFH and supported and approved by the Internship Directive Committee of Anadolu University in 22/12/2016 (EEYO Internship Directive, 2016). The "Internship Advisor" title was updated as "Internship Coordinator" in the new internship directorate of SFH and officially commissioned by the director of SFH in 22/12/2016. Since 2015, the internship coordinator of SFH organized various activities to improve effectiveness of the internship process of hearing-impaired students.

Internship Training Presentations: Internship Coordinator organized informative meetings for students about how internship process is performed. She monitored each student's internship process and contributed to taking necessary precautions. After the internship process, she actively participated in focus courses, in which internship process was presented to other students.

The first informative meeting of internship coordinator was held in 20/11/2016 (Figure 6). Since SFH students usually do their internship during the summer, informative meetings kept going in 2016-2017 spring semester. Architectural Drafting program's meeting was held in 07-21/03/2017, Computer Operator Training program's meeting was held in 17/03/2017, and Graphic Arts program's meeting was held in 17/03/2017 (Figure 6). In addition to the informative meetings, internship coordinator is continuously supporting students in relation to their internship.



Figure 6. Presentation of internship coordinator (20/11/2016)

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7. Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the findings from the research process, it was observed that hearing-impaired students were informed about internship process and they shared their information with other students in the process. Also examination of collected data showed that awareness of hearing-impaired students of SFH about work places increased and they were more conscious in their behaviour for getting to know work places. Another observation was that students began to ask questions about internship constantly. During the research process, one of the students changed her workplace, since she didn't get enough knowledge and experience and found a new workplace for more effective internship study. (Diary of Internship Coordinator, 03/11/2016). It was observed that students questioned and made critical evaluation of their internship processes. These observations strengthened the idea that internship perceptions of students were changed in a positive way. In the 2017-2018 school year, career awareness studies are added to the content of senior year Professional Language courses in all programs of SFH.

Having the consent of the director of SFH for the research, having a researcher, who is in the school management, having courses to use for career awareness studies were the reasons to facilitate research process. This research is continuously updated with the new activities in each semester. Diversification of internship environments and collaboration with workplaces and İŞKUR, which is a government institution to apply for a job in Turkey, are planning as future studies, in relation to the internship process of hearing-impaired students.

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