

LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES
IN THE WORKPLACE

ESİN YİĞİT

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

2011

LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES
IN THE WORKPLACE

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Educational Sciences

by
Esin Yiğit

Boğaziçi University

2011

Thesis Abstract

Esin Yiğit, “Learning Experiences of Individuals with Visual Disabilities in the Workplace”

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace with a focus on their ways of learning. On the one side, the study investigated the workplace experiences of individuals with visual disabilities by focusing on the theme “having a job” which included recruitment process, required knowledge and skills and the experiences in the workplace. On the other side, learning experiences of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace were examined under the dimensions of types of learning and learning sources.

Twelve individuals with visual disabilities who were working in Istanbul were interviewed for this study by means of a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. Six of the participants were working in public institutions whereas six of them were working in private organizations when the interviews were conducted. For in-depth analysis, half of the participants were determined among high school graduates and the other half from university graduates. The obtained data was analyzed using content analysis method.

The findings revealed that finding a job was rather challenging for individuals with visual disabilities and the participants found their jobs through exams, projects and personal contacts. While some participants stated that it was an intentional choice to work in their jobs, some others said that they had no other choice. In terms of required skills and knowledge, the significance of having a good command of computers was heavily emphasized throughout the interviews. Moreover, the use of switchboard, knowledge in the content area, a good memory, communication skills and daily living skills were also mentioned as important to effectively perform in the workplace.

The analysis of the data also indicated that individuals with visual disabilities had various problems in the workplace. Discrimination, not being given equal opportunities, issues related to the job itself, having to find their own solutions to the problems and not being regarded as an employee were mentioned as the most prevalent problems in the workplace. Furthermore, participants also indicated the attitudes of colleagues and managers, unawareness of people and problems stemming from physical conditions as having an impact on their performance.

In terms of the learning experiences of individuals with visual disabilities, the findings revealed that informal learning experiences were considered as the basic way of learning in the workplace. However, formal learning experiences were also emphasized especially by the participants working in private organizations. Based on the findings of the study, it could be stated that participants either learnt on their own or they learnt from other people in the workplace and their learning sources were mainly their colleagues, managers, the Internet or other individuals with visual disabilities.

Tez Özeti

Esin Yiğit, “Görme Engelli Bireylerin İş Yerinde Öğrenme Deneyimleri”

Bu çalışmanın amacı, görme engelli bireylerin iş yeri deneyimlerini ve öğrenme yollarını araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma bir yandan; işe girme süreci, gerekli bilgi ve beceriler ile iş yeri deneyimlerini içeren “iş bulma” temasıyla görme engelli bireylerin iş yeri deneyimlerini araştırmıştır. Öte yandan, görme engelli bireylerin iş yerlerindeki öğrenme deneyimleri; öğrenme çeşitleri ve öğrenme kaynakları boyutuyla incelenmiştir.

Bu çalışmada, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak İstanbul’da çalışmakta olan on iki görme engelli birey ile görüşülmüştür. Görüşmeler gerçekleştirildiğinde katılımcıların altı tanesi devlet kurumlarında çalışırken, altı tanesi özel kurumlarda çalışmaktadır. Karşılaştırma amacıyla katılımcıların altı tanesi lise mezunları, altı tanesi ise üniversite mezunları arasından seçilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular, iş bulmanın görme engelli bireyler için oldukça zorlu olduğunu ve katılımcıların sınavlar, projeler ve kişisel bağlantılar yoluyla iş bulduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Katılımcıların bazıları yaptıkları işi kasıtlı olarak seçtiklerini belirtirken, bazıları başka bir seçenekleri olmadığını söylemişlerdir. Gerekli bilgi ve becerilerle ilgili olarak, bilgisayara hakim olmanın önemi görüşmeler boyunca vurgulanmıştır. Ayrıca santral kullanımı, alan bilgisi, iyi bir hafıza, iletişim becerileri ve günlük yaşam becerileri de iş yerinde etkin bir performans için önemli olarak belirtilmiştir.

Data analizi, görme engelli bireylerin iş yerinde pek çok problemi olduğunu da göstermiştir. Ayrımcılık, eşit fırsatların verilmemesi, işin kendisiyle ilgili konular, problemlerine kendilerinin çözüm bulmak zorunda kalmaları ve çalışan olarak görülmemeleri iş yerindeki en yaygın sorunlar olarak belirtilmiştir. Katılımcılar ayrıca iş arkadaşları ve yöneticilerin tutumlarının, insanların bilinçsizliğinin ve fiziksel çevreden kaynaklanan problemlerin de performansları üstünde etkisi olduğunu belirtmişlerdir.

Görme engelli bireylerin öğrenme deneyimleri açısından bulgular, kendiliğinden öğrenme deneyimlerinin iş yerindeki en yaygın öğrenme yolu olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bununla birlikte, örgün öğrenme deneyimleri özellikle özel kurumlarda çalışan katılımcılar tarafından vurgulanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarına dayanarak, katılımcıların iş yerinde ya kendi başlarına ya da diğer insanlardan öğrendikleri ve öğrenme kaynaklarının temel olarak iş arkadaşları, yöneticiler, internet ve diğer görme engelli bireyler olduğu söylenebilir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a long and tiring journey to complete this thesis and now it is a great pleasure to thank many people who have walked with me throughout this path.

First, I wish to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor Assist. Prof. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı for the constant encouragement and guidance she has provided me throughout the whole process. I am indebted to her for being so approachable at all times and for sharing her expertise with me to make this thesis better. Her patience and moral support especially in the most desperate times was the motive for me to carry out this work.

In addition to my advisor, I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Assist. Prof. Z. Hande Sart and Assist. Prof. Nalan Babür for their invaluable contributions. Assist. Prof. Z. Hande Sart has been a perfect source of enthusiasm and encouragement and she has provided me with really precious recommendations. Assist. Prof. Nalan Babür has also been quite helpful by her constructive feedback and insightful comments.

My special thanks should go to Engin Yılmaz who has contributed to this study more than anybody else. His valuable suggestions and constant encouragement even when I thought about giving up made him the backbone of my thesis. I will be forever grateful to him for his willingness to assist me both morally and academically in each and every phase of this study.

Additionally, I am really thankful to the participants of the study for the trust they placed me in by frankly sharing information about their experiences.

I also want to thank Aylin Yılmaz at the Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences for the editing of this thesis and answering my questions.

Many thanks should go in particular to my dear friends who have supported me throughout the entire process: I would like to present my heartfelt thanks to my flatmate Sevinç Şimşek who has put up with me and my never-ending doubts during this period. She has always been a great stress reliever and her efforts to feed and cheer me up will never be forgotten. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Neslihan Yumrutaş, my life-long partner since the undergraduate years; for listening, understanding, sympathizing, humoring, advising, and doing all the other things that mean true friendship. I am also thankful to Hafize Çetin for being more than a colleague and constantly motivating me to finish this work. I also wish to express my appreciation to Fidan Sümbül and Tülin Keçeli for their moral support and friendship.

I am eternally grateful to Murat Balcı who has always stood by me in all my struggles and frustrations and tolerated my moodiness for seven years now. I know that he is always ready to “light the skies up above me” whenever I feel down. Were it not for his encouragement and support, I would not have found the strength to complete this thesis.

Last but not the least; I would like to thank my brother and mentor Fatih who is a real moral booster. I am so relieved to know that despite the kilometers he is always around whenever I need. And yet, I would like to present my deepest gratitude to my mother who persistently encouraged me to pursue this degree and has always tried to provide me with the opportunities she could not have had. This thesis is dedicated to her...

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	9
Definition of Terms.....	10
Organization of the Study.....	11
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	12
Adult Learning Theories.....	12
Learning in the Workplace.....	20
Disability and Employment.....	31
Workplace Experiences of Individuals with Visual Disabilities.....	35
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	45
Research Design.....	45
Research Settings.....	47
Population and Sample Selection.....	48
Data Collection Instrument.....	50
Data Collection Procedures.....	52
Data Analysis.....	54
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS.....	55
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants.....	55
Having a Job.....	63
Learning Experiences in the Workplace.....	96
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	117
Summary and Discussion.....	117
Conclusion and Suggestions.....	123
Limitations of the Study.....	124
Recommendations for Further Research.....	125
APPENDICES.....	128
A. The Interview Form in English.....	129
B. The Interview Form in Turkish.....	133
C. Informed Consent Form in English.....	137
D. Informed Consent Form in Turkish.....	139
E. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants.....	141
F. Themes, Dimensions and Codes for Experiences of Individuals with Visual Disabilities and Their Learning.....	144
G. Participants' Quotes in Turkish.....	146
REFERENCES.....	163

FIGURES

1. Dimensions of self-directed learning	15
2. Kolb's experiential learning cycle	18
3. Marsick & Watkins' informal and incidental learning model	27

TABLES

1. Possible Ideal-Types of Formal and Informal Learning	24
2. Three Forms of Informal Learning	29
3. Participants by the Type of Organization and Educational Attainment.....	49
4. Participants by Gender and Age.....	56
5. Participants by Educational Level.....	57
6. Participants by Work Status	58
7. Participants by When They Lost Their Vision, Degree and Cause of Their Vision Impairment	59

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In order to enforce and promote equality and protect the rights of every individual all around the world, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It was acknowledged that “All are equal before the law” (Article 7) and should not be discriminated on the basis of their race, color, sex etc. (Article 2). This, in fact, has brought about the increasing interest in the protection of rights of marginalized groups who are mostly exposed to discrimination in the society. Therefore, individuals with disabilities have been the focus of attention in the United Nations and other international institutions for many decades.

In an attempt to provide a better life for individuals with disabilities, the United Nations manifested the year 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons which brought along the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons. The Plan focused on the full participation and equality of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life through providing effective services and opportunities. Member countries were asked to prepare development plans putting an emphasis on “equalization of opportunities, rehabilitation and prevention of disabilities” (United Nations, 1982, p. 6). To achieve this, governments were identified as the main body responsible for the improvement of conditions; however, the roles of the individuals, society in general and organizations were also emphasized in this process to the advantage of individuals with disabilities.

In line with the objectives of World Programme of Action, Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the

United Nations General Assembly in 1993. Pointing out to the prevalence of problems encountered by individuals with disabilities around the world, the Rules aim at providing these individuals with the rights and services just like other people so that they become fully integrated members of the society. Made up of twenty two items, the Rules include four themes which are “preconditions for equal participation, target areas for equal participation, implementation measures, and the monitoring mechanism”. The rules are not obligatory; however, they are expected to be integrated into the national disability programs of member countries and serves as a guide for the steps towards the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Within the target areas for equal participation, Rule 7 covers the issue of employment which is one of the areas in which individuals with disabilities are mostly discriminated against. It has been emphasized that these people should be given equal opportunities in the labor market not only in urban but also in rural areas through related laws and regulations. Moreover, it is asserted that individuals with disabilities should be given an opportunity to open employment by means of ways explained below:

[...] This active support could occur through a variety of measures, such as vocational training, incentive-oriented quota schemes, reserved or designated employment, loans or grants for small business, exclusive contracts or priority production rights, tax concessions, contract compliance or other technical or financial assistance to enterprises employing workers with disabilities (Standard Rules, 1993, p.14).

Rule 7 also states that workplaces should be made accessible to individuals with disabilities through making appropriate adjustments and integrating new assistive technologies so that it will be possible for these people to successfully get and retain

employment. Moreover, proper training and placement both in public and private sectors are also highlighted with a focus on campaigns which will be organized to increase the awareness of public in a way to cope with the bias and intentional destructive attitudes of people about the capabilities of disability groups.

Adopted by the Council of Europe in 1961 and revised in 1996, European Social Charter deals with the rights and freedoms of all people including the topics like accommodation, employment, health, and education etc. Consisting of thirty one articles clustered around four themes, The Charter also sets the rights of individuals with disabilities in Article 15. In this respect, it is explained in the revised charter that individuals with disabilities should be given a chance to “independence, social integration and participation in the life of community” regardless of their age and the type of their disabilities (European Social Charter, 1996, p. 10). As a recommendation to realize this objective, it has been indicated that individuals with disabilities should be supported in terms of guidance, education and training which will make their employment possible in the competitive labor market. Moreover, it is also stated that employers should be tempted to employ these people and make appropriate accommodations to meet their needs which are essential for individuals with disabilities to gain and maintain employment.

In order to improve the conditions of individuals with disabilities in Europe, The Council of Europe also adopted Disability Action Plan (2006-2015) which forms a basis for policies aimed at full participation of individuals with disabilities in society throughout Europe. Among fifteen items about the issues related to disabilities, Action line No. 5 covers employment, vocational guidance and training of individuals with disabilities which are thought to have vital role on the inclusion of these people. The Plan asserts that it is essential for individuals with disabilities to

have access to vocational guidance and training to make occupational decisions which are in line with their capabilities and they should be given equal opportunities in all phases of their employment. In terms of employers, it is stated that they should be encouraged to employ individuals with disabilities and make necessary alterations in the workplaces as well as preventing discrimination through awareness-raising activities so that individuals with disabilities maintain in the labor market and become productive members of the society. The Plan makes it clear that implementation of the plan is the responsibility of member countries depending on the available conditions; however, there is a constant focus on the involvement of individuals with disabilities all the time for the achievement of presented action lines.

In addition to the international studies mentioned above, there are various legislations and laws worldwide for empowering individuals with disabilities at national levels. For example, in the USA, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was created in order to provide more rights for individuals with disabilities across the country just like the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in the UK. Similarly, there are also laws related to individuals with disabilities in Turkey. Accordingly, individuals with disabilities are mentioned under the special protection of the state in terms of social security in Constitution of Turkish Republic (1982) in Article 61. Apart from the Constitution, the rights of individuals with disabilities are covered by Turkish Disability Act (2005) No. 5378 whose aim is described as follows:

[...] to prevent disability, to enable the individuals with disabilities to join the society by taking measures which will provide the solution of their problems regarding health, education, rehabilitation, employment, care and social security and the removal of the obstacles they face and to make the necessary arrangements for the coordination of these services.

Related to the issue of employment, Article No. 14 states that

Working individuals with disabilities cannot be subjected to any different treatment than the other people with respect to their disability such that it could cause a result which is unfavorable for the individuals with disabilities. It is obligatory that measures in the employment processes in order to reduce or eliminate the obstacles and difficulties that may be faced by the individuals with disabilities who work or who apply for a job are taken and the physical arrangements are done by the establishments and organizations with the relevant duty, authority and responsibility and by the work places.

Furthermore, Labor Act No. 4857 Article 30 dictates the rules as to the employment of individuals with disabilities in the workplaces. In line with this act, public institutions have to recruit 4 % individuals with disabilities whereas this compulsory percentage is % 3 for private institutions. In case of the violation of the law, employers are subjected to penalty.

As it is pointed out in the country report by Anaç & Öznaneci (2009), Prime Ministry - Administration for Disabled People is the main body responsible for disability issues at the national level in Turkey. However, there are numerous other institutions and organizations providing service for individuals with disabilities such as The Ministry of Education, Directorate of Special Education, Guidance and Counseling Services as well as municipalities at the local level.

Just like other individuals of working age, employment has utmost importance for individuals with disabilities for their full participation into the society. However, despite all the steps taken towards the integration of individuals with disabilities in the society, it is emphasized in Disability Action Plan (2006-2015) that individuals with disabilities have lower rates of employment when they are compared to individuals without disabilities. On the other hand, individuals with visual disabilities seem to be at a more disadvantaged position considering the

competitive nature of the labor market and increasing demand for visuality in the workplace. Accordingly, Houtenville (1997) stated that it is highly probable for individuals with visual disabilities to have financial problems due to the high unemployment rates among this group.

World Health Organization (WHO) fact sheets state that there are about 314 million individuals with visual disabilities around the world, 45 million of them being totally blind and nearly 87 % of them living in developing countries. Furthermore, most of them are at older ages whereas the risk of visual impairment is higher for females.

According to Turkey Disability Survey carried out by Turkish Statistical Institution (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, TUIK) in 2002, overall ratio of individuals with disabilities in the population is 12.29 % - nearly 8.5 million people. This proportion includes individuals with orthopedic, seeing, hearing, speaking and mental disabilities with the percentage of 2.58 % and individuals having chronic illnesses with the percentage of 9.70 %. However, the exact number of individuals with visual disabilities is not known due to the fact that most of them are not legally registered to the governmental institutions. According to the survey results, on the other hand, labor force participation rate is 21.71 % among the population with orthopedic, seeing, hearing, speaking and mental disabilities, leaving the rest 78.29 % not in labor force. The rate of participation is even lower among females with the rate of 6.71%, whereas it is 32.22 % for males.

As for the employment of individuals with disabilities in Turkey, statistics by Turkish Employment Organization (Türkiye İş Kurumu, İşkur) showed that out of 36,144 applications by individuals with disabilities, there were 3,023 individuals with visual disabilities. In terms of the numbers as to the placement, there were 4,713

individuals with visual disabilities out of 32,257 individuals with disabilities who were placed in a job by the year 2010. Moreover, the number of registered labor force was indicated as 10,548 out of 76,449 individuals with disabilities (Statistical Yearbook, 2010, p. 63).

As it was also indicated in World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (1982); individuals with disabilities, including the ones with visual disabilities, have not been given equal opportunities to overcome the obstacles to their full participation into the society despite international efforts and national steps taken towards this goal. Likewise; Giesen, Graves, Schmitt, Lamb, Cook, Capps, Boyet (1985) pointed out that there should be really strong factors interfering with the successful employment of these people despite all the interventions and it is vital to address these factors to deal with the employment issue appropriately. Therefore, this study aims at exploring the attention experiences of individuals with visual disabilities and understanding how they learn in the workplace.

Statement of the Problem

Diversity in the workplace has received much in the last decades, especially focusing on the issues of gender and race. However, as it is pointed out in the literature, there is limited research carried out to understand the needs of individuals with disabilities in the workplace when compared to other groups. Smith (2002) explained this situation as “[...] in part due to the fact that individuals with disabilities only represent a small percentage of the working age population” (p. 59).

Although some research has been carried out with regard to the individuals with disabilities in general, there appears to be little research focusing on a specific disability type. Moreover, most of the limited research available relates to the

problems of individuals with disabilities while getting a job, rather than focusing on their specific needs in the workplace. Similarly, pre-employment barriers have been the focal point of studies about the employment of individuals with visual disabilities. However, as Naraine (2005) pointed out it is important to explore the barriers encountered by individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace and the ways to cope with these problems for a better understanding of their experiences.

Golub (2006) also pointed out to the scarcity of studies related to the perceptions of individuals with visual disabilities who succeeded in the workplace. He asserted that determining the contributing factors to successful workplace performance is a requirement for empowering individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace as well as informing employers about the possible interventions to apply in their workplaces. To do this, Golub (2006) and scholars like Arthur & Zarb (1995) and Cherry et al. (1992) emphasized the significance of looking at the issue from the perspectives of the individuals with visual disabilities.

As it is pointed out in the literature, it is the individuals with visual disabilities suffering from the highest unemployment rates among other disability groups (Houtenville, 1997; Wolffe & Candela , 2002). Thus, there is an urgent need to address their problems for developing more effective policies aimed at improving their conditions for a better integration into the society. The main purpose of this study has therefore been to understand the workplace experiences of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace and the ways they learn in order to perform their jobs.

In order to have a better understanding of the perceptions of individuals with visual disabilities, following research questions are addressed in this study:

- What are the experiences of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace?
- How do individuals with visual disabilities learn required knowledge and skills in the workplace both formally and informally in order to perform their jobs?

Significance of the Study

Depending on the existing studies, it is evident that learning about the perspectives of a disability group is important to identify and handle the obstacles that hinder them from being successful employees (Crudden et al., 1998). In Turkey, however, disability studies mainly focus on disabilities in general and finding a job is regarded as an end to the employment problem (Yılmaz, 2004). Thus, this study aims at contributing to the field of adult education by examining the perceptions of individuals with visual disabilities related to their experiences in the workplace.

Although limited in number, individuals with visual disabilities are employed in various occupations such as switchboard or call center operators, teachers, lawyers etc. in Turkey. Yet, it is essential to identify the perceptions of individuals with visual disabilities to be able to make effective accommodations in the workplace. Otherwise, changes that would be done without understanding their real needs would not be efficient in terms of meeting their needs and it would be impossible to enhance their chances to succeed in the workplace. However, studies on vision impairment do not go beyond presenting statistical data and the studies do not focus on understanding their problems and learning experiences in the workplace. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of visually

impaired adults about their experiences in the workplace along with a focus on their ways of learning.

This study will shed light on the problem of this special population from their own point of views. Therefore, the information obtained from this study is expected to help decision makers in their efforts to make appropriate accommodations while enhancing the quality of services presented to individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace. Finally, this study is hoped to provide a basis for the prospective policies aimed at this specific disability group and further studies regarding the employment of individuals with visual disabilities.

Definition of Terms

In order to ensure clarity and avoid any misconceptions, the terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Braille: A system of embossed printing for the blind. In this system, the symbols for the letters, etc., are composed of raised dots in different ways. It was adopted as the standard system in England by the British and Foreign Blind Association, 1869-70. (The Oxford English Dictionary, p.480).

Person with a disability (“disabled” in the Act): A person who has difficulties in adapting to the social life and in meeting daily needs due to the loss of physical, mental, psychological, sensory and social capabilities at various levels by birth or by any reason thereafter and who therefore need protection, care, rehabilitation, consultancy and support services (Turkish Disability Act, 2005, Article 3).

Impairment: It is a loss or abnormality in body structure or physiological function including mental functions (ICF, 2001, p. 213).

Organization of the Study

Chapter II presents a review of literature on adult learning theories, learning styles in the workplace and the experiences of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace along with the findings of similar studies. Chapter III gives information about the methodology including research design, sample selection, data collection instrument and procedures used for data collection and data analysis. Chapter IV provides an analysis of the data and the results. Finally, Chapter V presents a summary and discussion of the findings, explains the limitations of the study and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature for the present study consists of two sections: In the first section, a conceptual framework of adult learning theories is presented and formal and informal learning practices in the workplace are discussed. In the second section, problems and needs of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace are investigated. Current situation in Turkey and research findings of the related studies are also mentioned.

Adult Learning Theories

There have been several theories and models trying to answer the basic question how adults learn. As it is stated by Merriam (2001), there is no one theory giving a full account of adult learning process; but “there is a mosaic of theories, models, sets of principles, and explanations that combined, compose the knowledge base of adult learning” (p. 27).

Considering the wide range of explanations in relation to adult learning, it is important to develop an in-depth understanding of numerous theories of how adults learn so that it will be possible to put some of those principles into practice in order to make adult learning process more meaningful. Therefore, main adult learning theories are discussed in the following section for a better understanding of adult learning process.

Andragogy

In an attempt to document differences between the ways adults and children learn, Malcolm Knowles popularized the concept of andragogy in 1968. Taking the fact that “adults learn differently when compared to children” (Piaget) into consideration, Knowles asserted a comparison between pedagogy and andragogy and he defined the latter as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p.43). In his andragogy, adult learners were characterized based on the following assumptions:

1. As a person matures, his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.
2. An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience which is a rich resource for learning.
3. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
4. There is a change in time perspective as people mature – from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem centered than subject centered (pp. 44-45).

Setting out from these assumptions, Knowles suggested various implications for the design, implementation and evaluation of educational activities with adult learners. However, despite providing a better understanding of adults as learners, Knowles’ assumptions were criticized by Hartree (1984) as being “unclear and shaky” and were labeled as prescriptive statements which described the preferred characteristics of adult learner. Furthermore, as andragogy presents a set of characteristics about adult learners, Merriam (2001) stated that these assumptions were not true for all adults but may even be characteristics of children in certain situations.

Self-Directed Learning

As another model trying to define adult learners as different from children, self-directed learning has attracted the attention of researchers since Tough's studies on adult learning projects (1971, 1979). Despite the differences in the amount and type of self-directed learning in the general population, Tough verified the presence of independent pursuit of learning in adults' lives in his studies.

Knowles' model of andragogy also included self-directed learning stating that learners become increasingly self-directed as they mature. According to Knowles (1975):

Self-directed learning is a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (p. 18).

For Knowles (1975) there are three basic reasons for people to engage in self-directed learning: There is growing proof that if people take initiative in their learning, they learn more and better than people who don't; self-directed learning is more in harmony with our natural processes of development and most of the developments in education regard learners as responsible for their own learning.

Merriam et al. (2007) grouped the goals of self-directed learning as follows: "(1) to enhance the ability of adult learners to be self-directed in their learning, (2) to foster transformational learning as central to self-directed learning, and (3) to promote emancipatory learning and social action as an integral part of self-directed learning" (p. 107).

As it is mentioned in Merriam et al. (2007), learners go through a series of steps in order to reach their learning objectives in linear models of self-directed learning such as discussed in Knowles (1975) and Tough (1978). Interactive models, on the other hand, state that learning process is not so linear but factors collectively interact with each other. In their Personal Responsibility Orientation model (PRO), Brockett & Hiemstra (1991) presented a two-dimensional model called *self-direction in learning*. In this model, self-directed learning refers to the responsibilities of learners while planning, implementing and evaluating their learning experiences whereas learner self-direction refers to personality characteristics of individual learner. Garrison (1997) also proposed an interactive model of self-directed learning in which self-management, self-monitoring and motivational dimensions constantly interact with each other leading to self-directed learning (see Figure 1).

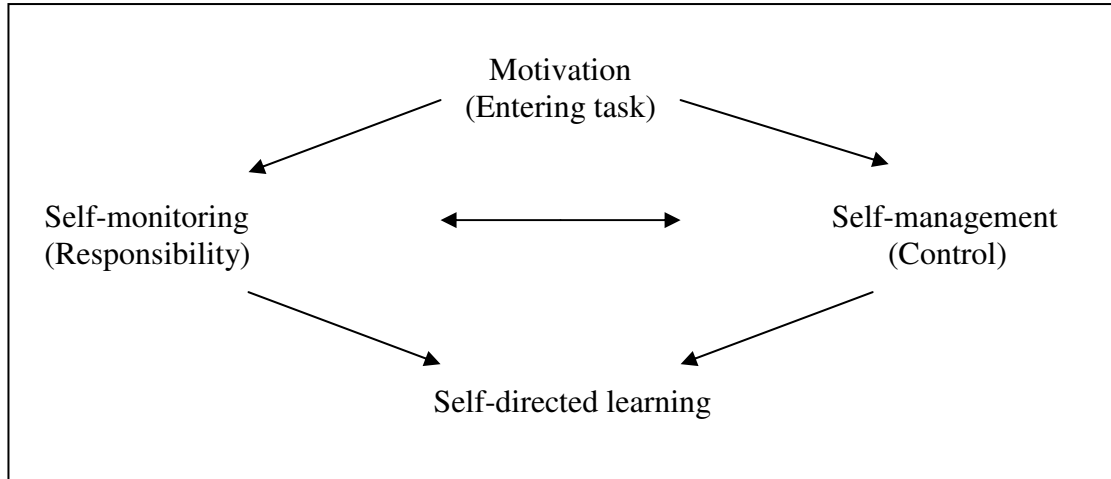


Figure 1. Dimensions of self-directed learning

Source: Garrison, 1997, p. 22.

Transformative Learning Theory

Introduced by Mezirow in 1978, Transformational Theory concerns how adults make sense of their life experience through learning. According to Mezirow (1996), pre-established norms taught at formal institutions in childhood create barriers for later learning practices and it is the core of adult education through transformation to break those boundaries so that individuals become free from oppressive ideas and realize the transition from being a passive learner to an active learner.

Mezirow, however, indicates that not all learning is transformational and for a learning to be transformational, it should follow certain steps which are suggested as follows in his 11-step process:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of personally internalized role assumptions and a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations
4. Relation one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues – recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. Planning a course of action
8. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
9. Provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback
10. Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships (added later by Mezirow, 1994b, p. 224).
11. A reintegration into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective (Mezirow, 1978 p. 7).

Critical reflection is the cornerstone of Mezirow's Transformational Theory. He states that for learners to change their beliefs or attitudes, they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991). Moreover, as the focal point of transformation process, learners have the utmost importance in Mezirow's theory. However, he is criticized for

dealing too much with individuals. Opponents of him claim that transformation involves society and the individual can never be isolated from the society (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Experiential Learning

The connection between learning and experience has always been emphasized in adult learning theories. Being the pioneer in adult learning, Lindeman states that “the resource of highest value in adult education is the learner’s experience and experience is the adult learner’s living textbook” (1961, pp. 6-7). Knowles et al. (1998) also states that adults’ experiences impact learning through creating a wider range of personal differences, enabling a rich source for learning process and providing a basis for adults’ self-identity.

Kolb (1984), basing primarily on the works of Dewey, Piaget and Lewin, proposed experiential learning theory and he defined it as the process in which knowledge is created by means of experience. For Kolb, as a consequence of getting and processing experience, knowledge is obtained and according to his model, there are four adaptive learning modes which are “concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation” (1984, p.40).

Kolb (1984) displayed these modes in a learning cycle which can begin with any one of the four elements, but typically begins with a concrete experience (see Figure 2).

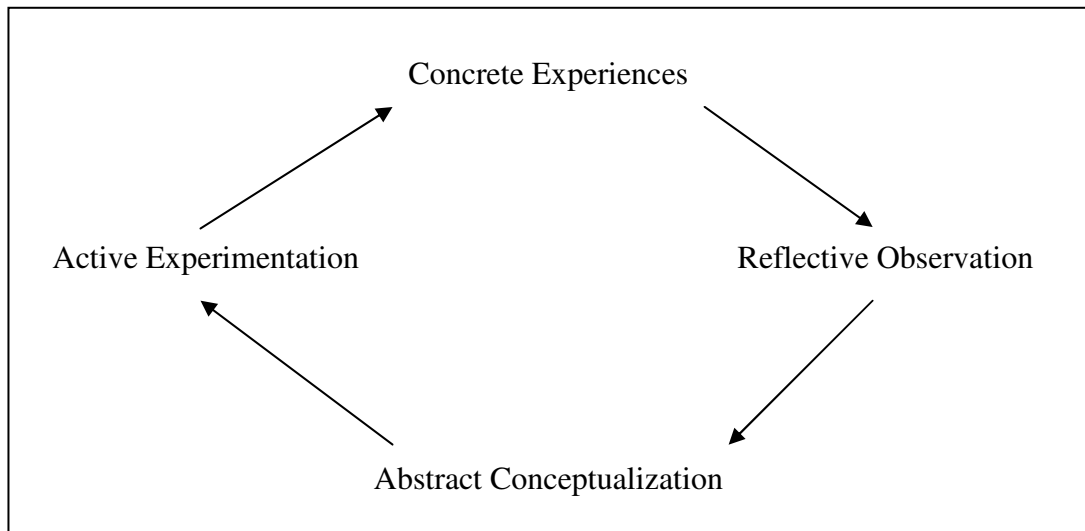


Figure 2. Kolb's experiential learning cycle

Source: Kolb, 1984, p. 42.

Emphasizing the importance of contextual or sociological aspect for learning from experience, Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997) came up with a map of experiential learning. In this model, they stated that learning does not stem from experience but instead experience and learning affect each other mutually.

Among the theoretical perspectives related to experiential learning, there are situated learning and reflective practice focusing on the different aspects of the theory. Directly related to the workplace learning, it is significant to mention their implications for the purposes of this study.

Opposing the idea that learning is an individualistic process, Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed the term situated learning emphasizing the significance of social and physical context and every day situations. They argued that learning should not be regarded as simply the transfer of abstract and de-contextualized knowledge from one individual to another, but it should be inserted into the social context since “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p.31).

In their model, legitimate peripheral participation plays a vital role since they assert that learning is not internal but social in nature. As learners unavoidably participate in communities, they need to master the skills and knowledge in order to transform from newcomers to full participants of a community of practice. For them, a greater dedication of time, strengthened effort, more responsibilities in the tasks at hand as well as an increasing sense of identity as a qualified practitioner are all necessities for full participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Schön (1983), on the other hand, focuses on reflection-in-action which he explains as “reshaping what we are doing while we are doing it” (p. 26). He states that through reflection, practitioners question the meaning of prior understandings which have been formed by previous experiences and by doing so they try to produce a new understanding and even a change in the situation. He further explains that

When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already present in his repertoire. To see this site as that one is not to subsume the first under a familiar category or rule. It is, rather, to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar or different with respect to what. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or an exemplar for the unfamiliar one (p. 138).

As stated before, there is no one theory completely explaining adult learning process. As Elias & Merriam (1980) put it forward these theories do not supply a person with a whole body of information about what and how to teach but they are more interested in the elements underlying the adult learning process. However, all of the theories mentioned above have contributed to adult learning theory in some respects and they all have implications for the learning process in the workplace which will be dealt with in the next part.

Learning in the Workplace

In this era of knowledge, there is an ongoing need for change and learning. Since education is no longer regarded as only limited to formal institutions, knowledge and expertise attained during formal education is not adequate for the demands of the workplaces (Eraut, 2004). Now, people are required to keep up with the changes and catch up with the latest, up-to-date information in order to increase their effectiveness not just for themselves but also for their institutions.

Billett (2002) explained the significance of workplace as the only site providing opportunities for many workers given the present reformulation of lifelong learning practices. He asserted that in order to figure out how and what people learn via their workplaces, it is vital to analyze the workplace dynamics including the kind of tasks people participate in, opportunities and support presented to them. Furthermore, Boud & Garrick (1999) pointed out to the contribution of workplace learning not only to the organizations but also to the personal development of individuals.

Considering the role of workplace on people's lives, workplaces as a site for learning have attracted the attention of scholars in the last decades and there is a tendency to distinguish between different forms of learning in the workplace as formal, non-formal and informal learning. For the purposes of this study, different ideas on this distinction are examined in the following section for a better understanding of underlying dynamics of workplaces.

Different Forms of Learning:

Formal, Non-formal and Informal Learning

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) glossary presents a general framework for different types of learning as follows:

Formal learning: Learning that occurs in an organized and structured context (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view and it typically leads to certification.

Informal learning: Learning resulting from daily work-related, family or leisure activities. It is not organized or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning is in most cases unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Non-formal learning: Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support), but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view but typically does not lead to certification.

Marsick and Watkins (1990), on the other hand, differentiate between formal and informal learning as follows:

Formal learning is typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured. Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner (p. 12).

According to Cofer (2000), the distinction between formal and informal learning is not related to the formality of learning, but it is the way of who directs the learning aims and goals which accounts. He states that objectives are determined by the training or learning division in formal learning whereas it is the learner who sets them in informal learning environments. He further asserts that informal learning

activities should be seen as complementary to formal learning not as a replacement because these two support each other. Bell (1977), on the other hand, used a metaphor of brick and mortar in order to give an account of the interaction between formal and informal learning in a workplace. He explained that

Formal learning activities may be viewed as bricks fused into the emerging bridge of personal growth with the mortar of informal learning. Informal learning facilitates the acceptance and development of formal learning and it is this synergy which produces effective growth (p. 280).

Adapting a different principle, the interaction between teacher / mentor and learner, Livingstone (2001) differentiates between formal education, non-formal education or further education, informal education or training and informal learning. For him:

Informal learning is any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria. Informal learning may occur in any context outside the pre-established curricula of educative institutions (p. 4).

Eraut (2000), however, expresses a strict preference for non-formal rather than informal learning and identifies five characteristics of formal learning as “(1) a prescribed learning framework; (2) an organized learning event or package; (3) the presence of a designated teacher or trainer; (4) the award of a qualification or credit, and (5) the external specification of outcome” (p.114). He strongly implies that any kind of learning that is not within these features should be regarded as non-formal.

Schugurensky (2000) also makes a distinction between formal, non-formal and informal learning and defines non-formal education as organized educational activities occurring outside the formal school system which are generally short-term and voluntary in nature and also carried out by teachers using a curriculum although

different in flexibility or rigidity. For him, programs such as tennis courses, second language programs, driving lessons, yoga classes, painting courses, training programs, workshops, etc. are all under the category of non-formal education and they sometimes give a diploma as a certificate of competence or attendance.

According to Schugurensky (2000)

Informal learning takes place outside the curricula provided by formal and non-formal educational institutions and programs outside the curricula of educational institutions' and not 'outside educational institutions', because informal learning can also take place inside formal and non-formal educational institutions. In that case, however, learnings occur independently (and sometimes against) the intended goals of the explicit curriculum (p. 2).

Hager (1998) compares formal learning, which includes formal classrooms and on-the-job training, and workplace learning and comes up with a long list of differences. To start with, formal learning is intentional and includes a preplanned curriculum whereas workplace learning does not have a formal curriculum and is often unintentional. Formal learning and informal learning are different in terms of the predictability of the learning outcomes and the awareness of the learners in relation to their learning experiences. Moreover, teaching / training process along with the content of the training is the focus of formal learning environments whereas the learning experiences of learners are focus of workplace learning. It is also important to note that formal classroom learning and on-the-job training emphasize individual learning and not contextualized; on the other hand, because of the social aspect of workplace environment, informal learning is accomplished by collaboration and contextualized. Finally, formal education and on-the-job training put a heavy emphasis on learning knowledge in contrast to informal learning which does not make a distinction between knowledge and skill distinction.

Colley et al. (2002) also came up with a list of distinguishing features for formal and informal learning which is depicted in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Possible Ideal-Types of Formal and Informal Learning

Source: Colley et al., 2002, pp.18-19.

Formal	Informal
Teacher as authority	No teacher involve
Educational premises	Non-educational premises
Teacher control	Learner control
Planned and structured	Organic and evolving
Summative assessment/accreditation	No assessment
Externally determined objectives /outcomes	Internally determined objectives
Interests of powerful and dominant groups	Interests of oppressed groups
Open to all groups, according to published criteria	Preserves inequality and sponsorship
Propositional knowledge	Practical and process knowledge
High status	Low status
Education	Not education
Measured outcomes	Outcomes imprecise/unmeasurable
Learning predominantly individual	Learning predominantly communal
Learning to preserve status quo	Learning for resistance & empowerment
Pedagogy of transmission and control	Learner-centered, negotiated pedagogy
Learning mediated through agents of authority	Learning mediated through learner democracy
Fixed and limited time-frame	Open-ended engagement
Learning is the main explicit purpose	Learning is either of secondary significance or is implicit
Learning is applicable in a range of contexts	Learning is context-specific

Emphasizing the disagreement about the uses of formal, informal and non-formal learning, Malcolm et al. (2003) oppose the idea of classifying learning as such.

Depending on the research carried out by Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2003) on workplace learning of experienced secondary school teachers, they claim that nearly all learning situations include the characteristics of formality and informality and the nature of the situation determines the balance between them. They conclude that “There are important elements of formal learning in informal situations and elements of informality in formal situations; the two are inextricably inter-related” (p. 313). Moreover, they focus on the claims about the superiority of informal learning as discussed in the literature and assert that all learning situations involve power inequalities and informal / non-formal and formal learning both can be emancipatory or oppressive at the same time; their extent relies on the wider context in which learning occurs.

Similarly, Billett (2002) claims that categorizing learning in terms of formalisms or deducing generalizations about them is not helpful. He argues that assessing workplace learning practices as either informal or not goal-oriented will lead to a restricted understanding of workplace learning. In his view, this categorization deemphasizes the role of human engagement in the formation and improvement of their knowledge.

Workplaces as a Site for Informal Learning

Informal learning is not a new phenomenon and dates back to the studies of Lindeman (1926) and Dewey (1938), who both focused on the significance of learning from experience and the role of reflective thought in learning. Tough (1999), on the other hand, found out that 73 % of all adult learning was planned by the learner himself or herself who decides on what to learn and how to learn it from one episode to the next. Likewise, some scholars also suggest that informal learning has

priority over formal learning and accounts for the most of learning that occurs in the workplace (Enos, Kehrhahn, & Bell, 2003; Lohman, 2000; Marsick and Watkins, 1992).

According to Marsick and Volpe (1999), informal learning is a result of people's meaning making process of their routine work lives whereas formal training, which is structured in nature, is an outcome of classroom environment. They stated that informal learning emerges through the daily course of people's lives, whereby it is not deliberate; it occurs by chance or randomly and is generally brought about by an internal or external factor. Furthermore, informal learning consists of reflection and action processes and is connected to the learning experiences of other people.

As Marsick and Volpe (1999) made it clear, not much is known about "how informal learning can best be supported, encouraged, and developed" in spite of its wide existence in the workplace (p. 3). Moreover, it has been pointed out that there are not many studies trying to explain the factors that encourage or inhibit informal learning practices in the workplace.

For Marsick & Watkins (2001), informal and incidental learning is at the heart of adult education and can occur wherever individuals have the need, motivation, and opportunity for learning. They note that informal learning can be intentionally supported by an organization or it can take place even though an environment is not very contributive to learning. They mention self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, and performance planning as examples of informal learning since they provide people with opportunities to review their learning needs. However, incidental learning is regarded as an outcome of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interaction between people, perceiving

the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning and people are not always conscious of it.

Stating that informal and incidental learning can be improved with facilitation or increased awareness by the learner, Marsick and Watkins (1990) developed a model for enhancing informal and incidental learning, which is later modified by Cseh, Watkins, and Marsick in 1999 (see Figure 3).

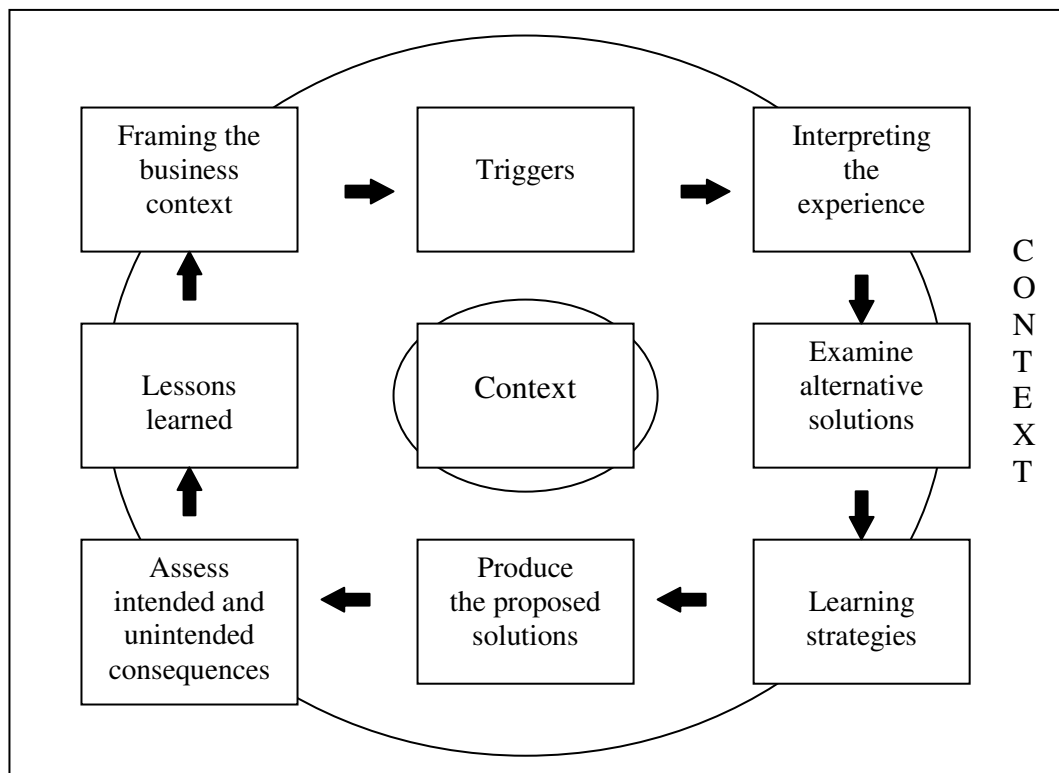


Figure 3. Marsick & Watkins' informal and incidental learning model as adapted with Cseh

Source: Marsick & Watkins, 2001, p. 29.

Although the model is arranged in a circle, it is noted that the steps are neither linear nor sequential. The model consists of two circles and the circle in the center represents the importance of everyday encounters in a given context for meaning making whereas the outer circle represents the context within which the experience

occurs. As the context is the key factor affecting people's way of interpreting the cases, their decisions and actions, it plays a vital role in the model.

However, Eraut (2004) emphasized the complexity of transferring knowledge from education to workplace environment and identifies the following phases in this process:

1. The extraction of potentially relevant knowledge from the context(s) of its acquisition and previous use;
2. Understanding the new situation, a process that often depends on informal social learning;
3. Recognizing what knowledge and skills are relevant;
4. Transforming them to fit the new situation;
5. Integrating them with other knowledge and skills in order to think, act and communicate in the new situation (p.257).

Eraut (2004) also came up with four different types of work activity which bring about learning. These are joining in group activities such as team works; working alongside others; dealing with challenging tasks which necessitate on-the job learning and working with customers. He also pointed out to the social aspect of informal learning and claims that it allows greater flexibility and freedom for learners and puts on a heavy emphasis on human agency. Depending on the several studies carried out on workplace learning, Eraut (2004) also stated that a great number of the learning in the workplace is informal and they generally stem from learning from other people and learning from personal experience.

Using intentionality and awareness as the basic categories, Schugurensky (2000) created a taxonomy which determines three types of informal learning (see Table 2). In this taxonomy, he defines incidental learning as

Learning experiences that occur when the learner did not have any previous intention of learning something out of that experience, but after the experience she or he becomes aware that some learning has taken place. Thus, it is unintentional but conscious (p. 4).

Table 2: Three Forms of Informal Learning

Source: Schugurensky, 2000, p. 3.

Form	Intentionality	Awareness (at the time of learning experience)
Self-directed	Yes	Yes
Incidental	No	Yes
Socialization	No	No

Boud & Garrick (1999) emphasize that learning at work cannot be explained through a single model since it is multifaceted and consists of more aspects to be taken into consideration when compared to learning in educational institutions.

According to Smith (2003), workplaces are often not effective in providing people with the structured support and guidance which is necessary to process information; thus, he focuses on the urgent need for training programs and policies which will be supportive of learning in the workplace and lead to learner self-directedness. In this sense, self-directedness is regarded as a tool for individuals to determine their own learning objectives, look for them on their own and also ask for assistance when needed.

In terms of the studies in relation to informal learning in the workplace, Ellinger (2005) carried out a qualitative study in order to figure out the contextual factors which affect informal learning either positively or negatively. She found out that learning-committed leadership and management are the contextual factors that play the utmost role on the informal learning processes in a workplace.

Lohman (2000), in her qualitative study, tried to find out the restraining contextual factors which prevented public school teachers from informal learning practices. From her data analysis, she came up with four environmental inhibitors to informal learning: “lack of time for learning, lack of proximity to learning resources,

lack of meaningful rewards for learning, and limited decision-making power in school management” (p. 89).

Enos, Kehrhahn, and Bell (2003) examined the role of informal learning during the managers’ process of developing their proficiency. Basing heavily upon their research findings, they concluded that formal learning is not a cure-all for learning and transfer of learning; but instead “organizations should harness and leverage informal learning” through making use of informal learning activities such as communicating with other people, observing others in the workplace and intriguing tasks related to job (p. 385).

Informal learning experiences in the workplace are not deeply explored in Turkey. Altay (2007) analyzed the informal learning in the workplace by means of a case study of software engineers in a private bank in Istanbul. Based on the assumption that workers learn in the workplace basically through informal learning, she conducted a qualitative study and concluded that adults were mainly self-directed learners. She came up with two basic categories of informal learning experiences: learning on their own and learning from other people. In this study, job related factors and personal factors were also found out to be effective in informal learning process.

Çimen (2009), on the other hand, studied the learning experiences of corporate training practitioners in the workplace related to their professional development. Similar to Altay (2007), she found out two main categories of informal learning which are learning on their own and learning from others. She concluded that it is the informal learning which leads to professional development in corporate training whereas formal learning experiences were complimentary.

Disability and Employment

Thornton & Lunt (1995) described having a job as the basic criterion for evaluating an individual's status in the social environment. Arthur & Zarb (1995) also highlighted the significance of equal employment opportunities as a focal point for a full participation in society. Likewise, for Tillsley (1997), the significance of work in life is not just as a source of income but it is also important in terms of providing status and respect as well as being an important aspect of personal identity.

In line with these ideas, Gillies et al. (1998) emphasized that just like individuals with disabilities; individuals with visual disabilities also regard work as an important part of their lives. On the other hand, Gillies et al. (1998) indicated that although various preparatory and placement-oriented initiatives have been taken, the rate of unemployment is dramatically higher in disability groups as compared to general population. Crudden et al. (1998) also pointed out to the underrepresentation of individuals with visual disabilities in the labor market just like other disability groups. For example, Wolffe & Candela (2002) stated that only 31 % of blind and 44 % of individuals with visual disabilities aged between 21 and 64 are employed. Tillsley (1997) also emphasized the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the paid work and estimated that nearly 75 % of working age individuals with visual disabilities were neither working nor had the opportunity to access employment.

Barnes (1992), on the other hand, emphasized that even if individuals with disabilities found a job, these were generally badly-paid, low skilled and low status jobs which were neither unrewarding nor undemanding. Focusing on similar issues, Thornton & Lunt (1995) pinpointed two main restraints that individuals with disabilities encounter in competitive workplace environment: significantly higher

level of unemployment and the type of jobs not matching with their skills. It was emphasized that individuals with disabilities were up to three times more likely to be unemployed.

Wollfe & Candela (2002) asserted that as a result of being away from the worlds of visually impaired or blind, many people do not show empathy to them and they state that “Not understanding something tends to result in avoiding it” (p.59). For them, general public’s prejudice about the capabilities of individuals with visual disabilities is the reason for the underrepresentation of individuals with visual disabilities in the labor market. Pointing out to the capabilities of these people, they concluded that it is possible to expand the labor pool by means of the inclusion of individuals with visual disabilities into the labor market.

Employment Related Issues

Traditional explanations for analyzing the problems encountered by individuals with disabilities both in the economic and social levels were based on the individual model of disability which suggested that it is the physical or psychological outcomes of impairment which resulted in these people’s inability to have a reasonable standard of living. However, Barnes (1992) stated that this model was not able to give a full account of individuals with disabilities’ situation and cited the social model of disability which asserted that it was not the impairment but restraining environments and barriers that affected their lifestyles. In line with this model, Barnes (1992) gave importance to the role of social and environmental factors and identified the factors that have a discriminating role in the employment of individuals with disabilities as follows: attitudes, medical screening, education, age, experience, appearance, inaccessible working environments, transport, geographical mobility and

shift working. Similarly, Kirchner et al. (1999) also pointed out to the “new paradigm of disability” also known as “environmental paradigm” which refers to the effect of context on the employment of individuals with disabilities and he contrasted it with the “medical model” which regarded the disability as the main cause of inability to work effectively (p. 59).

Thornton & Lunt (1995) provided a comprehensive discussion on the characteristics of earlier and current policies regarding the employment of individuals with disabilities. They distinguished between different types of obligatory actions: quota schemes, reserved employment and employment equity. For the purposes of this study and to be able to make rational comparisons to Turkey, an overview of these policies are presented here:

1. *Quota schemes* describes the legal obligation to recruit pre-determined proportions of individuals with disabilities. For example, private sector employers who had more than 20 workers in the private sector were obliged to employ at least a three percent quota of registered individuals with disabilities in the UK under the 1944 Act. Similar quota schemes were also applied in many countries including France, Germany and Turkey.

2. *Reserved employment and preferential access* are other forms of representing individuals with disabilities in the labor market. Reserved employment referred to designating certain jobs reserved only for individuals with disabilities such as passenger lift operator or car park attendant whereas in preferential access, individuals with disabilities are given priority for a job among other applicants. It has been emphasized that due to the perceived low status of such jobs, reserved employment or preferential access have the potential to lead misconceptions about the abilities of individuals with disabilities.

3. *Employment equity* aims at making employment opportunities equal for individuals with disabilities through dealing with problems in the work environment so as to improve the conditions for individuals with disabilities. For the sake of better work opportunities for individuals with disabilities, many European countries, including The Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, necessitates employers to make necessary adjustments in the workplace (Thornton & Lunt, 1995, pp. 9-16).

As Naraine (2005) pointed out, individuals with disabilities are generally not informed about their rights just like employers who are not aware of their responsibilities under the current laws. However, it is vital to comprehend the content of the legal framework for more effective accommodation practices; thus, it will be possible to make workplaces efficient for a full integration of those people.

Based on the data by the World Blind Union's (WBU) Committee on Rehabilitation and Employment, Wolffe & Spungin (2002) reported the results of a survey carried out among WBU member organizations. They concluded that there are certain categories of jobs performed by individuals with visual disabilities. These are:

Executive, administrative and managerial; professional specialty; technician and related support; marketing and sales; administrative support including clerical service; agricultural, forestry, fishing and related jobs; precision production, craft and repair; and operators, fabricators and laborers (p. 246).

Wolffe & Spungin (2002) concluded that individuals with visual disabilities have a wider variety of jobs in developed countries when compared to the developing countries. However, this variety in developed countries is far from matching the opportunities presented to individuals without any impairment. They further gave information about the barriers to employment mentioned by individuals with visual

disabilities. In line with other research, findings showed that “poverty, discrimination, lack of education and resources, employers’ prejudices about their skills and lack of necessary technologies” were among the top barriers perceived by this group of people (p. 252).

Due to the direct discrimination and related factors, Arthur & Zarb (1995) identified the most challenging stage during the employment process as obtaining a job for the first time. However, they emphasized that retaining a job might also be problematic because of the increasing competitive trend in the labor market as well as societal and environmental barriers which increased the probability of job insecurity and repeated periods of unemployment for individuals with disabilities

Workplace Experiences of Individuals with Visual Disabilities

Moore and Wolffe (1997) summarized the barriers to the representation of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace as follows:

- negative attitudes of employers toward individuals with visual impairments
- lack of employment and employment related-skills,
- lack of motivation for employment,
- government- generated work disincentives such as entitlement programs that provide welfare or disability benefits,
- lack of housing and family supports,
- lack of transportation,
- lack of access to information (p. 344).

Similarly, Naraine (2005) also identified the common barriers as vital for job maintenance as accessibility of printing and technology, transportation and independent movement, problems related to accommodation and the attitudes of employers.

Considering the fact that one of the frequently mentioned barriers to the employment is employers' attitudes, understanding employers' perceptions about working with visually impaired is also significant in terms of gaining more insight into the dynamics of workplaces. Wolffe and Candela (2002) carried out a qualitative study in which they interviewed nine employers to explore their opinions. They found that employers, who are on the other side of the coin, also had some worries about recruiting a visually impaired worker such as financial aspect of enabling accommodations in the workplace, possible risks of not reaching full productivity and the potential difficulty in termination of workers with disabilities when their performance is below the expectations. However, they also found out that when the employers have had the experience in working with individuals with visual disabilities, their negative attitudes are to change in a positive way.

Factors Contributing to Employment

Although disability studies have attracted a great deal of the attention in recent years, most of the studies focus on the factors which have an influence on the employment status of the individuals with visual disabilities. La Grow (2004), for example, examined the effects of age, gender, level of impairment, education level, and existence of other disabilities on the employment status of 150 working age visually impaired adults in New Zealand. He found out that gender, the degree of visual impairment and the presence of another disability had significant effects on the rate of employment whereas level of education did not have as direct an effect as expected.

Pointing out to the fact that employment rates are rather low among visually impaired adults, Bohman (1992) also carried out a quantitative research using thirty

four variables in order to see if they were related to employment status of individuals with visual disabilities. The data collected from 240 participants showed that orientation and mobility, age, usable vision, reading and writing skills were significant predictors of successful employment whereas variables such as marital status, gender leisure activities or personal care did not predict employability.

Heavily focusing on the low rate of employment, Crudden et al. (1998) carried out a research on 166 employed individuals with visual disabilities in order to identify primary barriers to employment, strategies to survive these problems and their perceptions related to their success at work. They concluded that problems related to employers' attitudes, transportation, mobility, technology, accommodation and types of jobs were among the major barriers to employment. Most of the participants highlighted the significance of networking with colleagues and clients along with an urgent necessity for changing the national policy regarding individuals with disabilities.

Graham (1997) investigated a summer work experience program which claimed to have a successful placement rate of 75 % by comparing two groups one of which joined the program whereas the other did not. The findings showed that the placement rate of the group who had joined in the program was relatively higher than the group who had not joined. The study also looked into the enabling factors given in the summer program through a qualitative part. The data collected from twenty participants mentioned emphasized the importance of the following factors:

[...] excellent administrative leadership, autonomy of professionals at the worksite, socialization on the part of the student participants, benefits from exposure to others with similar conditions of visual impairment, enhancement of independence through travel skills, creative tension supplied by program challenges, recreational activities and to a lesser degree, daily living skills (pp. 167-168).

Kelley (2001) conducted a study in which she used both telephone surveys and personal interviews to explore the factors that affect the employability of individuals with visual disabilities in Tennessee, USA. The findings were in line with other studies in that participants mentioned lack of reliable transportation, attitudes of employers and colleagues, lowered expectations of their ability to do the job effectively, access to the technology and a lack of job-related skills as the basic barriers to the employment. However, it was found that the degree of vision impairment, level of education and age did not have a significant role in the employment of individuals with visual disabilities in this study.

McDonnall and Crudden (2009) made a study with transition-age youths with visual impairment and analyzed the determinants of successful employment. They explored that being experienced, academic competency, being self-determined, using of assistive technology and locus of control are associated with successful employment whereas self-esteem and involvement with the counselor have no effect on the employment status at all.

Tillsley (1997) also found out that educational qualifications as well as the degree of impairment had direct influence on the employment opportunities. For the participants in this study, their disability and the attitudes of their employers are the basic impeding factors for their career development. Participants also provided the suggestions as to the improvement of employment opportunities and it was found out that this could be possible through altering attitudes of employers, colleagues and public in general; developing awareness of their abilities and a better understanding of the needs of individuals with visual disabilities.

Lee and Park (2008) conducted telephone interviews in South Korea so as to determine the factors affecting employment among individuals with visual

disabilities. Correlated with the other studies, they found that visually impaired men are more likely to be employed than visually impaired women. The findings also showed that the degree of disability is negatively correlated with the possibility of employment along with the existence of another disability. However, contrary to other research findings, this study did not find any correlation between the attitudes towards disabled and the employment.

O'Day (1999), pointing out to the complexity of problems encountered by the individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace, came up with the following barriers: biased attitudes of the public, disability-related issues, inadequacy of skills required to carry out the job effectively, and the lack of knowledge and access to technology. Acknowledging the significance of individual and societal causes of unemployment among individuals with disabilities, O'Day also asserted that the policies applied by the governments such as income maintenance, health care and rehabilitation programs are also influential in this high rate of unemployment. It was concluded that policies should be comprehensive enough to deal with the individual and social as well as programmatic issues for a better employment opportunities for individuals with visual disabilities.

La Grow & Daye (2005) focused on the need to determine the obstacles to the employment and tried to identify the barriers to employment and possible solutions expressed by individuals with visual disabilities. The sample composed of 95 participants who were interviewed through telephone surveys. The barriers to employment were grouped under two categories: (1) the direct and indirect consequences of having severe vision impairment such as physical inaccessibility, difficulties in public transport, lack of specialized equipment and training; and (2) attitudes and behaviors of potential employers. The solutions to all these barriers

were centered on three themes: providing trainings related to disability including assistive technology, changing possible employer attitudes especially while employing individuals with visual impairments and enabling better vocational services.

Gillies et al. (1998) compared the perceptions of individuals with visual disabilities with individuals without disabilities using the Employment Access Questionnaire (EAQ). The questionnaire is structured around four factors that affect the employment status of individuals with visual disabilities and in line with the structure of the questionnaire, the findings presented rich information on those factors which were mentioned as training, career guidance, work expectations and assistance. The results of the study showed that individuals with visual disabilities suffered from higher rates of unemployment and were significantly less satisfied with career development services and training opportunities when compared to individuals without disabilities. Furthermore, it was found out that individuals with visual disabilities regarded themselves in a disadvantaged position in terms of access to employment opportunities.

Workplace Experiences of Individuals with Visual Disabilities

As the research findings indicate, there are a number of barriers for the individuals with visual disabilities to be employed in the labor market (Tillsley, 1997, Kelley 2001, Crudden et al., 1998, La Grow, 2004). However, finding a job is not an end to these difficulties and brings about another set of challenges. Although the research focuses on the factors encountered by the individuals with visual disabilities while obtaining employment, there has been limited research paying attention to their needs in the workplace.

Smith (2002), using telephone-surveys, interviewed twenty-six participants from the fields of law and information technology in order to look into some of the issues encountered by individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace in Australia. She concluded that negative attitudes and misconceptions of colleagues and employers were still the main problems for individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace. Furthermore, she commented that even minor changes in the workplace may result in more efficient performance of individuals with visual disabilities to overcome some of the problems faced in the workplace. She also emphasized the cooperation of employers and employees while organizing the workplace in harmony with the needs of individuals with disabilities when it is necessary.

Keller et al. (1999) looked into the workplace situation and job satisfaction of eighty participants in Germany. In line with the previous research, the significance of work in their lives was emphasized whereas underestimation of their capabilities by employers or colleagues appeared to be the most frequent problem by most of the participants. In contrast to other studies, it was found out that the participants were generally satisfied with their workplace experiences. However, the fact that job satisfaction was affected by the visual impairment itself was stressed out which led authors to comment that this influence would vary among individuals.

Directly related to individuals with visual disabilities, Newton et al. (2007) studied individuals with disabilities' experience of the built environment while they are trying to access and stay in employment. Using a qualitative approach, they interviewed thirty-eight individuals with disabilities all of whom had paid or unpaid work experience. Strongly correlated with the previous research findings, they concluded that individuals with disabilities encounter a number of problems in the

built environment and the enabling properties of a workplace environment is the key for successful employment experience for many individuals with disabilities. They further asserted that the problems related to the physical environment should be handled carefully because they have a vital role in preventing access to employment although individuals with disabilities have the necessary skills to carry out the job.

Setting out from the previous research findings that individuals with disabilities report lower levels of satisfaction in relation to their workplace experiences compared to individuals without any disabilities, Uppal (2005) made an analysis so as to give an account of this difference using the data collected annually by General Social Survey (GSS) in Canada. The results showed that when certain features such as discrimination, harassment, poor interpersonal relations, risk of injury, too many demands etc. are controlled in the workplace, level of dissatisfaction for individuals with disabilities decreases.

In a study to evaluate the influence of visual impairment on workplace experiences, Shaw et al. (2007) found that employment rates of individuals with low vision are higher than the rates of individuals with no vision. It was also explored that the degree of vision impairment, educational attainment, engagement in daily living activities and the expectations of parents regarding disabled person's performance were influential in one's successful employment experiences.

Pointing out to the low employment rate among individuals with disabilities, Young (1995) conducted a focus group with employed individuals with visual disabilities in order to explore the reasons that made them successful in their workplace experiences. Participants in the study expressed similar characteristics contributing to their success: positive attitudes toward life and high expectations of themselves; engaging in jobs they are interested in; adaptation to the environment;

acceptance of their disability and developing coping strategies and having successful role models. Closely related to these characteristics, the study also yielded some recommendations for the successful integration of individuals with visual disabilities into the workplace such as addressing to their needs for adaptation, teaching basic skills like the mastery of Braille and independent travelling skills and enabling visually impaired to have access to successful role models through related programs.

Naraine (2005) explored the lived workplace experiences of thirteen individuals with visual disabilities through in-depth interviews. The study focused on post-employment barriers which were mentioned by the participants as follows: access to print and assistive technology, the unavailability of training, negative attitude of employers, inefficiency of accommodation and problems related to transportation, orientation and mobility. Revealing that the participants were often not informed about their legal rights, the study concluded that despite recruiting individuals with visual disabilities, the organizations in the study were not adequate in terms of adjusting the needs of individuals with visual disabilities physically, psychologically or socially.

Unlike many studies that focused on the barriers, Golub (2006) looked into the factors which enabled individuals with visual disabilities to be successful in their workplace environment. From the interviews carried out with twenty two visually impaired participants who had successful employment experiences, he came up with an integrative model focusing on the reciprocal responsibilities of the employees and the employers. He concluded that dual responsibility of both employers and employees is the key for successful employment of individuals with visual disabilities.

Disability studies in Turkey has not focused on one specific disability, instead they have provided information about the general disability groups. For example, Yılmaz (2004) looked into the problems encountered by individuals with disabilities in their workplaces. Extracting data from the interviews with 341 individuals with disabilities working in Ankara, she concluded that individuals with disabilities suffer from problems stemming from the lack of educational opportunities, transport, physical environment, health and social security. The study also showed that as a result of inadequacy of vocational programs, individuals with disabilities are either unemployed or underemployed.

The only study which specifically dealt with the employment problems of individuals with visual disabilities in Turkey was conducted by Bengisu, Izbirak and Mackieh in 2008. In their study, they phone-surveyed 144 employed and 54 unemployed individuals with visual disabilities from fifteen cities. Although most of the participants reported not having encountered any discrimination, it was found out that hiring, promotion and underestimation of their capabilities are among the problems of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace. The study also concluded that participants focus on physical, attitudinal and organizational issues which are expected to be handled by the society, municipalities and the state.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This section covers the methodology of this study presenting detailed information about research design, research settings, population and sample selection, data collection instrument, pilot study and the procedures which were used to collect data and analyze them.

Research Design

This study aims at exploring the perspectives of individuals with visual disabilities related to their workplaces and how they learn in the workplace. Stake (2010) pointed out that there is “a shift from cause and effect explanation to personal interpretation” (p. 31) in qualitative research. Thus, this is a qualitative study which bases mainly on personal experiences of the participants.

Denzin & Lincoln (2003) suggest that qualitative studies look into things in their natural environments and the aim of the researcher is to understand the event from the viewpoint of the people. Merriam (2009) also presents some features that characterize qualitative research: For her, qualitative study focuses on meaning and understanding of the experiences of people and the researcher is seen as the basic instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Moreover, she explains that qualitative research is rich in description and inductive in nature because the phenomenon being studied cannot be fully described by a theory.

Merriam and associates (2002) point out to the meaning making process in qualitative research by stating:

[...] the world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that is assumed to be positivist, quantitative research. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context (pp.3-4).

As Merriam and associates (2002) stated, researcher is the basic instrument for collecting and analyzing data in qualitative research. They further asserted that

Since understanding is the goal of this research, the human instrument, which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data. Other advantages are that the researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process information (data immediately), clarify, and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual and unanticipated responses (p. 5).

In spite of providing an in-depth understanding of the topic from the viewpoint of the participants, qualitative research also brings about some problems. For example, Merriam and associates (2002) pointed out to the drawbacks of the human instrument and stated it is vital to recognize and check these biases throughout the study instead of striving to remove them. Looking at this kind of research from all aspects, Stake (2010) also discussed some of the disadvantages of qualitative study as the prospect of ethical risks, intensity of labor and privacy matters as well as the cost. The increasing need for validating the data, concurrently emerging questions and the fact that reaching a conclusion takes a long time were also mentioned as the problems associated with qualitative research. Self-report used as the data collection method was further mentioned by Lohman (2000) and Enos et al. (2003) pointing out to some drawbacks which might include biases or even distortions of the reality as presented by the participants.

As the objective of the current study was to see the participants' point of views and explore their ways of learning, qualitative research was thought to be the most convenient method. Therefore, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used to collect data.

Research Settings

The current study aims at exploring the perspectives of individuals with visual disabilities related to their workplace experiences and the way they learn in case of new situations. In order to understand the circumstances of the individuals with visual disabilities better, the researcher tried to include as many different organizations as possible. In this way, it was possible to see the differences stemming from organizational attitudes.

The main distinction for the organizations in which the participants had been working was that they were working either in public or private organizations. For the purpose of confidentiality, organizations were not referred by their names.

Six of the participants in the study were working in public organizations whereas six of them were working in private institutions. As stated before, the laws in Turkey enforce the employment of individuals with disabilities mentioning certain percentages which 4 % for public organizations and 3 % for private organizations. However, not all the participants had been working in their current workplaces due to the obligations enforced by the laws. Both in public and private organizations, there were participants who had been employed regardless of the obligation to employ individuals with disabilities.

Population and Sample Selection

Population of this study consisted of all individuals with visual disabilities who were working when the interviews were conducted. However, given the circumstances, it was impossible to reach and conduct interviews with the whole population.

The sample for this study, therefore, was selected by using purposive sampling method aiming at extracting valuable information about the personal feelings and opinions of individuals with visual disabilities related to their workplace experiences. As Patton (1990) puts it forward, there are various types of purposeful sampling and each of them uses different strategies in line with the purposes of the studies. Accordingly, maximum variation sampling was applied in the current study which states that any joint patterns derived from great variation worth looking into while describing the basic experiences and shared respects of a topic. According to Patton, choosing a sample of great diversity will provide two essential advantages to the data collection and analysis:

(1) high-quality, detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and (2) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity (p.172).

For the purpose of this study, following criteria was established while determining the participants:

- 1) A willingness to take part in the study and share personal experiences as an individual with visual disabilities.
- 2) Full-time employment in either a public or private organization with minimum six months of experience to be able to address the research questions.

- 3) Education level of either high school completion or being a university graduate.

Before the interviews, a sample of sixteen participants was considered feasible for this study. However, taking the data saturation into account, twelve voluntary individuals with visual disabilities were determined as the participants of the study. Six of the participants were working in public organizations whereas the other six were working in private institutions. Within each group, there was also a differentiation between the educational attainments of the participants: university graduates versus high school graduates (see Table 3).

Table 3. Participants by the Type of Organization and Educational Attainment

	The Number of Participants Working in Public Organizations	The Number of Participants Working in Private Organizations	Total
High-school graduates	3	3	6
University graduates	3	3	6
Total	6	6	12

In line with the above criteria, all the participants had been working in either public or private organizations for at least seven months and they varied in their age, gender, experience, and positions in their workplace. However, in order to avoid any biases that may result from gender-related issues, the number of female and male participants were tried to be balanced in the study. Accordingly, the number of female participants was five whereas it was seven for the male participants. Finally, so as to provide confidentiality, pseudo names were used for each participant.

Data Collection Instrument

A semi-structured interview was developed by the researcher in an attempt to explore the experiences of individuals with visual disabilities related to their workplace and the ways they learn formally or informally. Considering the research settings, the interview form was developed in Turkish for the purposes of the study and it was later translated into English.

Stake (2010) identified the essential purposes of interviews as follows:

1. Obtaining unique information or interpretation held by the person interviewed
2. Collecting a numerical aggregation of information from many persons
3. Finding out about “a thing” that the researchers were unable to observe themselves (p. 95).

Setting out from these objectives, the interview questions were phrased in a way to observe the phenomena from the viewpoint of the participants and explore the nature of the issue in depth.

Development of the Interview Form

Since there was no related study in Turkey, an interview form was developed by the researcher as the data collection instrument basing on the related literature review and several studies including the ones by Naraine (2005), Altay (2007), Darensbourg (2008) and Çimen (2009).

First of all, the interview form was checked with a colleague of the researcher who is a PhD student in adult education and a person with visual disabilities. His insights into this topic enabled the researcher to add relevant items, see the problems

in some questions and revise them so that making it a more lucid and comprehensive form.

The initially developed interview form consisted of eight questions for demographic information and fourteen questions for exploring the perspectives of the participants on the issue. As a second step, this form was piloted with two people with visual disabilities. Depending on the responses and the feedbacks of the participants taking part in the pilot study, some changes were made on the interview form.

The final version of the interview form used in the current study consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to obtain demographic information for descriptive purposes through eight questions which asked about the participants' gender, age, educational level, marital status, when they lost their vision, the level of impairment, their job and year of experience in this job. The second part, on the other hand, included fourteen open-ended questions focusing on the experiences of the participants related to their workplaces and how they learn in the workplace when there is a new situation. (see Appendices A and B for Turkish and English versions of the interview form, respectively.)

Pilot Study

When the interview questions were formed thoroughly, a pilot study was conducted. Pilot study aimed at identifying any discrepancy and correcting the statements in an appropriate way so that they do not lead to any confusion or missing information on behalf of the participants.

In order to increase the validity of the interview form, the pilot study was conducted with two individuals with visual disabilities so as to determine if the

questions were clear and comprehensible for the participants. The first participant was a 30 year old, History graduate, male employee with five years of work experience in different organizations ranging from a software company to teaching chess. He was employed in a technological center for individuals with visual disabilities when the interview was conducted. The second participant was a 32 year old, high school graduate, female employee who has been working as a switchboard operator for thirteen years in the same institution. The first participant gave permission to use a sound recorder which made it possible for the researcher to focus on the flow of the interview better whereas the second participant did not want to be taped since the interview took place in her workplace. The fact that the whole interview was to be written by hand was challenging for the researcher because of the difficulty of keeping up with the pace of the participant's speaking.

After the interviews, it was obvious for the researcher to make some changes on the interview form which proved problematic during the pilot study. First of all, two questions were difficult for the participants to differentiate between and elicited the same responses; thus, they were merged. Secondly, depending on the insights of the first participant, a new question related to the expectations of people with visual disabilities was added to the interview form.

The pilot study was beneficial for the researcher in terms of providing a kind of rehearsal for the actual interviews and pinpointing the researcher the need to be flexible while interviewing the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Before the data collection process, Boğaziçi University Technological Center for Individuals with Visual Disabilities (Görme Engelliler Teknoloji Merkezi - GETEM)

was first contacted and informed about the purpose of the study. The director of the center provided a list of prospective participants who were currently working in different organizations and were thought to provide valuable information for this study. After having the list of nearly twenty individuals with visual disabilities, participants were called to explain the purpose of the study and to get their approvals to participate in. Except for two individuals who stated their heavy workload as an excuse, all the contacted people agreed to take part in the study voluntarily. Appointments were made with each participant taking their priorities into account related to when and where the interviews would be carried out.

The participants were interviewed after their working hours or on their off-days and the interviews took place outside of their workplaces. The participants were verbally asked for their permission to record their voice at the beginning of the interviews so that no information would be missed. All the participants approved the use of a digital sound recorder which enabled the researcher to carefully analyze their responses later. As the interviews were carried out in crowded places, the participants were listened carefully and some notes were taken to be used later if necessary. Moreover, in order to avoid any distraction during the interviews, elaborating questions along with the actual interview questions were asked to clarify the responses of the participants.

Considering the ethical issues, an informed consent form presented in Appendix D was prepared by the researcher in advance of the interviews. Before starting the interviews, the researcher read the consent form to the participants in order to inform them about the aim and content of the study and the confidentiality of their responses.

The data was collected during April and May 2011 and the interviews lasted about sixty minutes.

Data Analysis

When the interviews were completed, the data collected was analyzed by using the content analysis method. In order not to miss any information mentioned by the participants, all the interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher. In this way, it was possible to review the transcribed data several times.

After the transcription of the data, the researcher analyzed the content of each interview and identified emerging themes, codes and dimensions. Upon the completion of the analysis, relevant themes and codes were presented in detail along with the quotes from the interviews with the participants.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews conducted with twelve working individuals with visual disabilities. First, demographic characteristics of the participants along with their vision impairment and career histories are provided in order to form a base for the following parts (see Appendix E for demographic characteristics of the participants as a study group). Next, findings derived from the data analysis are presented under the following themes: having a job and learning experiences in the workplace (see Appendix F for emerging themes, dimensions and codes).

Participants' statements which are translated into English are quoted under the relevant themes. Participants' original statements in Turkish are presented in Appendix G. For the sake of confidentiality; each participant is represented with pseudo names which are also used in the discussion. To give some personal information about the quoted participant, their age and current occupation are provided in parenthesis after each quotation.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The semi-structured interview form used in this study consisted of two parts. The first part had eight questions asking the following information about the participants: gender, age, educational level, marital status, when they lost their vision, the degree and the cause of their vision impairment, the sector in which they work and total years of experience.

Participants who took part in the study were between 20 and 36 years old with an average of 29. There were five female and seven male participants with percentages of 41.7 % and 58.3 % respectively (see Table 4).

Table 4. Participants by Gender and Age

#	Name	Gender	Age
1	Aslı	Female	31
2	Beyza	Female	28
3	Burak	Male	33
4	Gözde	Female	30
5	İbrahim	Male	22
6	İpek	Female	29
7	Kemal	Male	32
8	Melike	Female	20
9	Metin	Male	27
10	Ozan	Male	33
11	Ömer	Male	36
12	Tarık	Male	25

In terms of their educational attainments, six of the participants had an undergraduate degree whereas six of them are high school graduates. One of the participants from the high school graduate group was studying in the open university. University graduates varied in their areas of study and there were graduates of history teaching, pre-school education teaching, guidance and psychological counseling, English language teaching, communication and public relations, and political sciences and

international relations. When their educational backgrounds and work status were examined together, it appeared that only two of the participants, who were teachers in public schools, were working in jobs directly related to their own areas.

Three of the university graduates had been studying in a master's program when the interviews carried out. The areas of study were educational administration, sociology and human rights (see Table 5).

Table 5. Participants by Educational Level

#	Name	Educational Level	Undergraduate	Master
1	Aslı	University	History Teaching	Educational Administration
2	Beyza	University	Pre-School Education Teaching	-
3	Burak	High School	Open university*	-
4	Gözde	University	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	Human Rights Law
5	İbrahim	High School	-	-
6	İpek	University	English Language Teaching	-
7	Kemal	High School	-	-
8	Melike	High School	-	-
9	Metin	University	Communication and Public Relations	Sociology*
10	Ozan	High School	-	-
11	Ömer	University	Political Sciences and International Relations	-
12	Tarık	High School	-	-

* continuing

With respect to work status of the participants, six of them were working in public organizations whereas six of them were employed in private organizations. The most

experienced participant had thirteen years of experience while it was seven months for the least experienced participant.

Out of 12 participants, four of them were working as switchboard operators and four of them were working in call centers. Two of the participants were working as teachers and there were one officer and a product manager. (see Table 6).

Table 6. Participants by Work Status

#	Name	Type of Organization	Total Years of Experience	Work title
1	Ash	Private	7	Crew Planning Operator
2	Beyza	Public	4	Teacher
3	Burak	Private	10.5	Switchboard operator
4	Gözde	Private	5	Customer relations expert
5	İbrahim	Private	1	Call center operator
6	İpek	Public	6	Teacher
7	Kemal	Public	10.5	Switchboard operator
8	Melike	Public	7 months	Switchboard operator
9	Metin	Public	8 months	Officer
10	Ozan	Public	12	Switchboard operator
11	Ömer	Private	13	Product manager
12	Tarık	Private	1.5	Call center operator

Related to the vision impairment, eight of the participants were totally blinds. Four participants mentioned having light perception, two of them also being totally blinds. Only two participants had vision changing between 15-30 %; however, one of them could read when the enough light is provided.

Five out of twelve participants stated that they had no vision since birth whereas other seven lost their vision at different ages of their lives. The reasons for the vision loss were generally because of genetic reasons, cross-cousin marriages, death of vision cells. There were two cases of vision loss due to accidents whereas some participants did not know the exact reason of their impairment (see Table 7).

Table 7. Participants by When They Lost Their Vision, Degree and Cause of Their Vision Impairment.

#	Name	When they lost their vision	Degree of their vision impairment	Cause of their vision impairment
1	Aslı	At birth	Totally blind	Genetic
2	Beyza	At birth	20-30 %	Cross-cousin marriage
3	Burak	9 years old	Totally blind - Light perception	Accident
4	Gözde	1.5 years old	Totally blind	Cyst in the eye
5	İbrahim	15 years old	15 %	Death of vision cells
6	İpek	16 years old - Progressive loss	2 % - light perception	Death of vision cells
7	Kemal	13 years old	Totally blind (sun light perception)	Cross-cousin marriage
8	Melike	11 years old	Totally blind	Car accident
9	Metin	2.5 years old	Totally blind	Tumor
10	Ozan	At birth	Light perception	Cross-cousin marriage
11	Ömer	At birth	Totally blind	Not known - hypertension
12	Tarık	At birth	Totally blind	Not known – Chernobyl

After providing demographic information related to the first part of the interview form, some information about each participant is presented below for a better

comprehension of their workplace experiences (see Appendix F for all demographic characteristics of the participants).

Aslı: She was 31 years old. She had an undergraduate degree in History Teaching and she was studying on a master degree in Educational Administration. She had been working in a private organization as a crew planning operator for five years. Previously, she had worked in a public organization for two years as a computer teacher for individuals with visual disabilities. She had no vision since birth and the reason for her vision impairment was genetics although no one in her family had a similar problem.

Beyza: She was 28 years old. She had an undergraduate degree in Pre-school Education Teaching. She had been working as a teacher in a public school for nearly one year but she had taught for four years both as a volunteer and in a private organization. Her vision impairment had been since birth and the exact reason for the impairment was not known for sure. However, as her parents were relatives, she focused on the possibility of the effect of cross-cousin marriage on her vision impairment. She had 20-30 % vision and she stated that regardless of the font, she could read when there was enough light.

Burak: He was 33 years old. He was a high school graduate. He had been working in the same private organization for 10.5 years as a switchboard operator. He had cataract when he was born but he lost his vision when his friend threw a stone to his eye when he was nine years old. He was a totally blind but there was light perception on his left eye.

Gözde: She was 30 years old. She had an undergraduate degree in Psychological Counseling and Guidance and she had been studying on a master degree. She had been working as a customer relations expert in a private organization

for five years. She stated that her vision loss was because of a cyst which was noticed when she was 6-7 months old. Even though she had seen through her left eye until she was 1.5 years old, she did not remember seeing. She was a totally blind.

İbrahim: He was 22 years old. He was a high school graduate. He had been working in a private organization as a call center operator for nearly one year. He started to lose his vision when he was 15 years old. At the time of the interview, he had 15 % vision; however, his impairment was progressive vision impairment which meant that he would become a totally blind.

İpek: She was 29 years old. She had an undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching. She had been teaching in a public school for six years. She expressed that she had optical problems since birth but her vision loss became a major problem for her when she was 16 years old. She was diagnosed with progressive vision loss and had a vision of 2 % which is just a light perception.

Kemal: He was 32 years old. He was a high school graduate. He had been working as a switchboard operator in a public organization for 10.5 years. He had his vision impairment since birth; however, through three operations, he saw until he was 13 years old when he lost his vision. The reason for his vision impairment is due to cross-cousin marriage. He had also a daughter with visual disability.

Melike: She was 20 years old. She was a high school graduate. She had been working as a switchboard operator in a small public organization for seven months. She lost her vision in a car accident when she was eleven years old and she was totally blind. At the time of the interview, she was attending a rehabilitation center for daily living skills. She expressed that she was thinking about attending university.

Metin: He was 27 years old. He had an undergraduate degree in Communication and Public Relations and was studying on his thesis on Sociology

for a master degree. He had been working as an officer in a public school for eight months. His vision impairment started when he was eight months old because of a tumor in the eye and he had lost his vision when he was 2.5 years old. He was a totally blind.

Ozan: He was 33 years old. He was a high school graduate. He had been working in a public organization as a switchboard operator for twelve years. He had only light perception since birth and he stated that the cause of his vision impairment could be resulting from cross-cousin marriage and he had two other brothers with visual disabilities.

Ömer: He was 36 years old. He had an undergraduate degree in Political Sciences and International Relations. He had been working as a product manager in IT department in a private organization for thirteen years. He said that his vision impairment was noticed when he was 2.5 years old and thought to be existing since birth. Although he did not know the exact cause of his impairment, hypertension was regarded as a possible reason.

Tarik: He was 25 years old. He was a high school graduate. He had been working as a call center operator in a private bank for 1.5 years. He had no vision since birth and the reason for his vision loss was not known for sure. However, as his family was living in a town in The Black Sea Region, it was thought that the radiation leakage from Chernobyl explosion could be the reason since his mother was pregnant during the accident.

After providing demographic characteristics of the participants having taken part in the study, findings of the interviews are presented in the next section under two main themes: having a job and learning experiences in the workplace.

Having a Job

In this section, having a job is presented under three dimensions: recruitment process, required skills and knowledge and the experiences in the workplace.

Recruitment Process

Finding a job is a difficult process for many people all around the world. Considering the demands of a visual world, this period is even more challenging for individuals with visual disabilities. In line with the purposes of the study, when the participants were asked how they had started their jobs, they came up with different reasons and stories all of which depicted the distressing period they had gone through.

Analysis of data revealed that only one out of twelve participants had found a job immediately after graduating from school, either high school or university. For others, minimum amount of time for finding a job was 8 months. This period was described by one of the participants below:

I could not find much acceptance in the private corporations I went because pre-school teaching includes more visuality and as the private institutions look more commercially, they expect a high performance from you. It is believed that you cannot show that performance as a person with visual impairment and generally you are rejected. A few institutions including the one I was graduated from – actually I cannot say that I went to 10-20 institutions – in fact my applications were for 3-5 institutions but generally they were negative, reactions were negative because there was a perspective like “It won’t work, how is a person with visual disability possible?” (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.1.).

Another participant stated that she thought she could easily find a job since she was aware of her capabilities and sure of herself. However, she noted that despite all her qualifications and the positive interviews, it was difficult for her to find a job:

The interviews were good, I was appraised a lot but consequently there were nothing [...] Be sure, I am not sure if there is another person having been such appreciated but cannot find a job, going to the interviews but being unsuccessful. I went to so many interviews and none of them were negative for me but most of them were eye wash (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.2.).

On the other hand, the difficulties encountered even before the beginning of their careers were indicated by one of the participants as follows:

I got the job through governmental officer exam [Devlet Memurluğu Sınavı - DMS] which was announced in 1999 and recruited in 2000. There was not a position for employees with disabilities. I applied just like everyone and stated in my report that I had impairment and asked for a reader. Preferences were already problematic, 10,000 job offers were announced and out of these 10,000 appointments, there were only four suitable offers that I could choose (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.3.).

When the participants were asked about how they found their jobs, they had varied responses. To be able to see the picture clearly and make necessary connections, participants were analyzed according to the type of their organizations. First of all, out of six participants who were working in governmental organizations, five of them stated that they took the compulsory exam which was a prerequisite to become a public officer. However, there were differences among the reasons which encouraged them to take this exam as was expressed by one of the participants:

Actually, I wanted to work in private sector; not regularly, but there were periods when I looked for a job. I could not find a job I wanted. Perhaps you want more things as the age goes by. Then I took the civil service exam and I succeeded. I needed income; I entered (Metin, officer, Appendix G.4.).

Another participant explained that after working in private organizations for a few years, she realized that they were not suitable for her and decided to take her chance in a public organization:

Actually, working in public was not completely my target, I did not have it in my mind but an exam was announced for individuals with impairments [...] It was not a concrete aim for me to work in public; however, in private sector, getting your money starts not to satisfy you after a while because I could not find that former spirit; everything was commercial [...] I realized that private institutions were not the places I could work in and that is why, this exam was an opportunity, I took it and succeeded (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.5.).

Furthermore, she also thought that it would be easier to have an academic life if she worked in a public organization and this thought stimulated her to look for a position in a public school:

I really like researching or such academic studies more and I still miss them. I can continue teaching but I do not want to remain only as a teacher. I prefer doing other things in a university environment in public, staying at school is not my only target. This was the main reason why I passed to a public school; I can get a graduate degree because if I had stayed in the private organization, this would have been impossible. I could have been fired because of this. (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.6.).

However, only one of the participants working in a public organization said that he did not take such an exam and stated that he got his job thanks to a person he knew:

They were employing individuals with disabilities, I applied but I went there with a reference – with a reference of an acquaintance (Ozan, switchboard operator, Appendix G.7.).

As for the participants working in private organizations, projects which were aimed at recruiting individuals with disabilities were the mostly mentioned way which provided their entry into the current jobs. As enforced by laws, private companies employ individuals with impairment through projects which are initiated and supported by different institutions. Three out of six participants stated such projects as the starting point of their careers:

We started through a project. There is an obligation of employing 3 % individuals with disabilities for companies having a certain number of staff. Company X recruited 100 people in order to provide this quota. There were two criteria: first, you have to be registered to İşkur and you need to have taken 2004 public personnel selection exam (Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavı – KPSS). I had both of them and made an application. I was invited to the interview. The interview was conducted by 8-10 people and after this interview, there was a positive response, I was recruited (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.8.).

However, two of the participants working in private organizations indicated that they were not working within the quota scheme specifically allocated for individuals with disabilities and had started their jobs through the usual way which means after applying for the position and having interviews. Having gone through several interviews, one of these participants described this process as follows:

Close to the graduation – to the end – one of them was Company Y while I was having job interviews. It was the most positive interview and they had the most positive offer; that is why, I started there. I also started to have special interest in computers (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.9.).

Finally, as it was the case for the participants working in public organizations, only one participant among the ones working in private organizations stated that he got his job through his personal contacts.

However, one participant explained that after having numerous applications and interviews which remained inconclusive, she was able to find a job through a project and she stated that she had no other choice but to work in her current job. Nevertheless, she thought her current position as a step to her ideals and stated that she could work in a better position matched with her skills and qualifications:

Working in call center was not my preference, there was only that project at that time [...] I thought that once I started there, then I would

definitely switch to another unit. The sector in which I want to work is educational field; I will try to pass to that side during this period. It could be counseling [...] As a matter of fact, I want to work in this field (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.10.).

To summarize, the ways which made it possible for the participants to get their jobs were various: through exams, projects, references or applications. However, interviews with the participants revealed that job finding was an even more challenging period for individuals with impairment when compared to individuals who have vision.

Required Skills and Knowledge

Setting out from the fact that unemployment is quite prevalent among individuals with visual disabilities; participants were asked what skills and knowledge were required so that they could carry out their jobs. Analysis of the data revealed that using computers, enough knowledge in the content area and communication skills were the most significant requirements mentioned by the participants. Some other skills and materials were also emphasized during the interviews.

To begin with, proficiency in the use of computers was indispensable for the participants in the study. All of the participants stated that they used computer in their daily lives whereas seven of them reported actively using computer in their workplaces while performing their jobs:

Of course, it is necessary to use computer first of all; I mean, having a command of computers is required (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.11.).

Likewise, one of the participants stated that it was essential to follow and use assistive technologies in his job and explained the significance of doing so by saying:

While performing this job, there is a need to use and follow assistive technologies related to individuals with visual disabilities. That is a requirement. Jaws, there could be speech synthesizer, there are technological software. Apart from these, there is a need for Office. In addition to being a good user of computer, there is a need to follow assistive technologies and even if you do not use them, you need to follow the improvements closely related to that topic (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.12.).

Another participant explained how it is important for individuals with visual disabilities to use computers even in their daily lives let alone in the workplace. She emphasized the fact that it was the computer which gave them the chance to work on their own:

I can say that using a computer is *sine qua non* for most individuals with visual disabilities. Each person with visual disability should use computer or else they encounter a lot of problems, we even encounter now. Not everybody has to work but I think it is great for a person sitting at home to chat on the MSN because you have a social networking. I know that a lot of people have Facebook accounts or etc. Computers should be somewhere in our lives because it really changes life [...] I cannot tell you the pleasure I had when I first made my PowerPoint presentation. Without the help of anybody, otherwise we used to write with somebody, we used to project it on the wall; however, having the total control of something is a great thing. The computer enables this to a great extent (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.13.).

The way individuals with visual disabilities uses computer is different from other people. In order to perform an action, they need to use a program called narrator which vocalizes the texts on the screen when the mouse comes over. By hearing what the narrator tells them, they do what they want. In other words, it is the narrator which makes the use of computer possible by individuals with visual disabilities. Consequently, the contribution of narrator was explained by one of the participants as follows:

The narrator program we use is really important; I can say that it is the reform of the era. Otherwise, it is like a dream (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.14.).

On the other hand, eight out of twelve participants were carrying out jobs directly related to using a telephone either as a switchboard operator or as a call center operator. These participants expressed that they were using a switchboard called “call master”. In addition to making calls, call master was used to direct incoming calls to the related units.

Analysis of the data revealed that there was a distinction between switchboard operators and call center operators in terms of the use of the assistive technology. Whereas the former ones were mainly executing their jobs by using call master, the latter ones were making use of computers along with call master since their job was more complicated and included some tasks other than directing incoming calls. Accordingly, one participant working as a switchboard operator focused on the prominence of having a good memory as well as mentioning the importance of assistive technology as follows:

The only thing necessary to carry out switchboard is – if the person is totally blind – a good memory or technological devices that will compensate for that memory. [...] I actually know how to use computer, I know Braille, I possess all these but I use none of them in my job. Totally memory (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.15.).

Another participant working as a switchboard operator also indicated that the main tool for performing her job was call master. However, she further explained that she used computer to do extra things:

There is no material I use other than the telephone. I also use computer but there is a directory for storing phone numbers, I only use computer for it (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.16.).

However, one of the participants stated that he was a primary school graduate when he started working and believed that not much was required to perform his job. He explained the use of call master and expressed his thoughts as to the use of it as follows:

There is no need for some skills or information. You understand that it is an incoming call, what the person wants, whom s/he wants to talk to, what the topic is; you keep that person waiting for a short time and transfer him/her by pushing transfer button and you hang up. That is all, there is no need for a special education [...] It is the most mediocre and on the back burner job, having little or no contribution to the works (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.17.).

In addition to having a good command of computers, another participant mentioned the importance of having work related knowledge combining it with some other skills which were needed to execute her job:

[...] then my job is communicating with people, I work with telephone. Skill of talking on the phone should be good, listening well is necessary; there is a need to understand and give convincing responses. To do this, of course, you need to know your job (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.18.).

Communication skills were also emphasized by the participants in the study. As their job consisted of constantly communicating with people, the significance of having good communication skills was also indicated by one of the participants as follows:

You need to be a good communicator; I think that the power of communication is really noteworthy. You need to be quite patient, you need to keep your nerves under control and most of customer relations managers cannot do that: they either do not do it or they do not care. There is a real need to understand people (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.19.).

Moreover, the same participant reported that persuasive ability was significant because convincing people was a vital part of their job:

There should be an ability of persuasion and tone of voice which will make people believe in you. The person feels at once that you will solve that problem or not; at least even if you cannot solve it, s/he sees your efforts and goodwill on that topic (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.20.).

Persuasive ability was also mentioned by another participant along with a comprehensive knowledge related to the job:

S/he should have a grasp of all the issues related to his/her job, should have a good diction, persuading addressee. I think that the person in the switchboard is a kind of psychological counseling center because you carry the calling person through the one s/he wants to reach or you can change the opinion of that person through a job you do there - through your behavior (Ozan, switchboard operator, Appendix G.21.).

Most of the participants in this study were totally blinds. Accordingly, white cane was used by all of the participants in the study. Even though it was not a material to be used while they were doing their job, it was significant for the participants in terms of providing them with mobility. The significance of using a white cane was explained by one of the participants as follows:

I also use white cane, I am a person with little vision but I always use it; when my vision would not be necessary, I always have it in my hand. Even though I do not use it actively, white cane helps me in that sense in situations when my vision falls short of (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.22.).

Another participant working as a teacher explained that white cane was momentous for her especially in the school because children were really active and it was thanks to the white cane that she was wandering around comfortably:

I learned white cane in the rehabilitation [...] I always walk around with my cane; even so they [children] come upon me (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.23.).

Different from the others, one of the participants had 20-30 % of vision and she was able to see and read when enough lighting was provided. Accordingly, she expressed the importance of small reading and palm lamps which made it possible for her to execute her job in the classroom easily:

I have reading lamps and also small lamps. I use my reading lamp for more essential things, when I need a brighter environment, during reading studies etc. (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.24.).

Analysis of the data revealed that seven out of twelve participants could read Braille. They had learned it at different times of their lives. However, they did not mention it as a requirement for finding a job and none of them used it in their workplaces. One of the participants expressed his opinions as to the use of Braille as follows:

I got primary education in a school for individuals with visual disabilities and they taught Braille. However, the basic problem is absence of materials in Braille format, not learning it (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.25.).

However, another participant having 20-30 % vision stated that she had learned Braille at university for the purposes explained below:

I learned Braille when I started to work with children with disabilities at university; at the same time, in case I need it in the future. After all, seeing little is a risk and it can be lost at any time. In other words, both for myself and for teaching. (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.26.).

Although six of the participants were university graduates, none of them mentioned the need for a degree while carrying out their jobs. Nevertheless, it is known that

there is a need for a degree to be able to apply for certain positions in public organizations now. In other words, having a degree is a prerequisite for being an officer in Turkey. Undoubtedly, this was the case for the participants in the study even though they did not put it into words. However, teachers are different from the others in that they are to provide a degree related to their field of study and this went for two of the participants who were working as teachers in public schools. On the other hand, one participant being a university graduate and working as an officer did not have such an obligation.

All in all, having a good command of computers was substantially focused on by the participants. In addition to computers, using switchboard, knowledge in the content area, and having communication skills were also mentioned by individuals with visual disabilities throughout the interviews.

Experiences in the Workplace

Analysis of data revealed that problems encountered by individuals with visual disabilities did not finalize by finding a job. Workplace also brought about a new set of difficulties which were categorized under the following categories: work-related issues, attitudes, and physical conditions.

Work-Related Issues

When the participants were asked about their experiences in the workplace, they mostly focused on the issues directly related to work. Even though they were working in different organizations and relatively different areas, some of the experiences were shared which made it possible to form the codes explained in the following part.

Discrimination

Data analysis showed that discrimination was the mostly mentioned issue throughout the interviews. All the participants were able to come up with an example of discrimination in their workplaces. However, there were some adjustments which were made considering the needs of these people and these were regarded as affirmative or reverse discrimination by some of the participants. On the other hand, some participants did not accept such a term and they focused on the fact that they were not integrated into the society or the workplace but separated from them in this way.

To begin with the acts of discrimination which separated individuals with visual disabilities from the others, one participant stated that discrimination was all-round in the workplace. She explained that when they started working as individuals with no vision, they were not only discriminated against individuals with vision but also against individuals with little vision:

[...] Later on everybody started to work, training period was over, everybody got their usernames and passwords but of course there was nothing coming to use as individuals with no vision. There were also individuals with little vision, nothing difficult was experienced by them, they could follow the monitor (Ashi, crew planning operator, Appendix G.27.)

Another example of discrimination was also stated by the same participant explaining the fact that even though her qualifications and experiences were better than a person in the workplace, she was again discriminated just because she had vision:

We started to work two people, both of us were coming from call center; she was a high school graduate I was a university graduate; I had worked in call center for two years, she had worked for nine

months but she was a sighted person having no disability. Just in the afternoon, she was given a task and said that “You will do this and that job”, I am just sitting of course. I started to work nine months later. After my computer was installed, neither my supervisor nor my manager had a look at if it was going OK or if I could manage (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.28.).

However, one of the participants focused on the discrimination she experienced when the meetings were held in the workplace. In contrast to other people, she was neither informed nor invited to the meetings:

For example, when there is a meeting, I don't participate in. They do not say “Don't attend” but they don't invite either, they don't say something like “We are going to have a meeting.” I do not go as I am not informed (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.29.).

Discrimination in terms of the given opportunities was also mentioned by two participants. Following participant explained that although she suggested attending a training program in the workplace, she was not given a chance to do so whereas it became possible for other personnel later on:

There was a training given to cabin crew who started new, team planning training was given – working hours, program reading etc. As I was learning the job new I had many needs, I wanted to participate in that training, in fact personnel do not participate [...] Our supervisor did not accept and later on this was accepted and everybody was taken to that training except me. I was the one who proposed [...] The ones who started with me or even the ones having started just before me were taken to that training. When I asked to my supervisor, she said I had already learned. It was not the issue there (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.30.).

Likewise, another participant indicated that he was excluded from a training program which was given to the employees in the workplace. He further stated that

Once came an e-mail, it was probably six years ago. There was going to be a training program about how to talk to the customers in. My manager did not want me to go there, there was a script about me too.

It was on the weekdays. She said “We have works to do, do not go, something should answer the phones”, she prevented the trainings (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.31.).

While the participants were describing their experiences related to the acts of discrimination they encountered, it was interesting to note that some of these acts were intended for the good of individuals with visual disabilities. For example, three of the participants in the study explained that they were allowed to take the lunch break earlier than the others in order to get their meals comfortably and regarded this as an affirmative action:

I go to the dining hall one or two minutes before the lunch time when there is no one, I go there with a companion [...] Discrimination is everywhere. The simplest example is this, something special to me is organized, done, privilege is provided (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.32.).

Such affirmative actions were also stated by the following participant who mentioned that in the company he worked in, individuals with impairments were given some privileges including elevators and personnel service vehicle:

There is a queuing line for elevators; we are not included in it. Normally people get on the elevator successively in the rush hour or lunch as it is rather crowded; people cannot get on randomly. However, we can because there is the possibility of being late. For example, in some places, you cannot walk fast because there are people. That is why; we can get rid of this by going out and getting on the elevator early, if there is no one with us. We were given an option in this topic; this is an option of employees not the administration. [...] Our personnel service vehicles are stable, they do not change. Normally, the places of vehicles are not stable. To be able to find it. Normally, people already help but in case there is nobody or being dependent on someone is not my style, thus, we demanded it. We at least demanded it to be on certain points, it was accepted (Tarık, call center operator, Appendix G.33.).

Another participant stated that she was not assigned as a hall monitor in the school even though this was compulsory for all teachers. However, she was content with this situation since keeping an eye on so many children during the breaks was challenging for her because of her impairment. Moreover, she explained that if she was assigned with this duty, this would mean putting the safety of those children in jeopardy:

I did not know that I would not be monitoring, they just made me sign but I saw that my name was not on the list. It is rather unsafe there, when something happens, it is your responsibility (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.34.).

Not all the participants, on the other hand, felt at ease with such acts and expressed their dissatisfaction with so called affirmative action because of being separated from the rest as was the case with the following participant:

There are big notebooks. They need to be packed up everyday and brought back again in the morning, there are massive suitcases in which those notebooks are carried. Previously, there was a janitor doing this job, but he is not there anymore, personnel would do this job, it was put into shift. I was not in the office on that day; they excused me from the shift. For example, if you ask this to them it is affirmative action but for me it is awfully unnecessary because my vision impairment is not an obstacle for me to carry that bag since it necessitates physical power. If I had a problem in my back or walking problem, it could distress me. Even these seeming like positive are in fact – I think – negative (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.35.).

Another participant focused on the discrimination which stood out in seating order in which all the individuals with disabilities were gathered together in the office and other people could assess it differently but things might have meanings other than the ones on the surface:

While we were moving from the head office, a seating plan came; there was a friend with a crutch and a friend with visual disabilities in the unit, they put us in the same place in the seating plan. For me,

things between the lines are very important [...] these things give so valuable messages in fact. I don't know who prepared that seating plan but it was obvious that there was someone who approved it. They could explain it in many ways, "For the convenience of our friends" but no, this could not be evaluated in terms of being a convenience. This is a specific discrimination but if I told this to someone, they would not understand, they would say "This is for your convenience" (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.36.).

Furthermore, one participant stated that even though people had good intentions while doing some actions, she was affected negatively by their results since she was prevented from acting appropriately in certain situations:

Positive for whom? When they think, it is of course affirmative – they have protective manners, they are well-intentioned but it is not something positive for me. On the contrary, it is humiliating. When I want to stand up, when I want to do something, "Stop, or you will fall" things like that, bad in a sense (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.37.).

Accordingly, one participant made it clear that regardless of the causes, discrimination could not be positive in any way because of the fact that the person was separated from the rest of the society:

Discrimination is negative for a person with visual disabilities even if it is positive; there could be nothing as positive because it means you are discriminated, you are needed to be discriminated; that is why, I do not give it a chance (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.38.).

To summarize, acts of discrimination were heavily emphasized by the participants of the study. Although some of them were regarded as affirmative because of the positive intentions behind, most of the participants were not content with the discriminatory atmosphere of their workplaces either positively or negatively.

Job Itself

Job opportunities given to individuals with visual disabilities are limited in Turkey as it was the case with the participants of the study. Accordingly, they had shared concerns about the jobs they had been carrying out and they were emphasized by six participants throughout the interviews. For example, one participant working as a pre-school teacher expressed her concerns about the safety of her students due to her vision loss whereas she also focused on the positive aspects of her job:

Normally, it is quite enjoyable to be with children, very good and meaningful but at the same time rather tiring, stressful; you need to be very patient and as they are young children, you should be constantly keeping eye on them. However, as a person with little vision, it is not always possible because children are quite active and energetic; they are kids, they have to be so [...] Pre-school teaching has many good sides but has only one disadvantage: you are forced to be dependent on a sighted person because you do not have the chance of saying “I can do that. Anybody comes, helps me, I can send them to the restrooms”. No, you need the help of someone from time to time (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.39.).

Likewise, another participant working in a public school also pointed out to the problems stemming from her vision impairment and consequently, affecting her performance as a teacher:

You are really at a disadvantage in some topics: You cannot check writing of children, this is a very big disadvantage because I am teaching 4th and 5th grades and they can write wrong [...] My sister-in-law grades the exams. I am only aware of the grades of the exams; actually, it is a disadvantage because you cannot know where exactly children had mistakes (İpek, English language teaching, Appendix G.40.).

However, one participant explained that he was not content with doing the same job for years and stated that having an immobile job brought about some health problems which were widespread among individuals with disabilities:

Man is not a robot, doing the same job gives you trouble after a while, you get bored. Furthermore, our job is done by constantly sitting; most individuals with disabilities have already this problem, especially individuals with visual disabilities. Area of action becomes narrow, gaining weight, cervical disc hernia, backaches etc; that's why, I am not happy with the job being done. I have been doing the same job for 10-11 years and doing the same job for years makes you bored (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.41.).

Finally, one participant stated that he had problems in the workplace since he did not have a good command of English which was the language of the system they had been using in the workplace:

Up to now, I have not had any difficulty but at first the company had its own problems; I had difficulty in them because the system was totally English. I did not know much English and then the system turned to Turkish, now it is more comfortable (İbrahim, call center operator, Appendix G.42.).

All in all, analysis of data showed that issues regarding the jobs being carried out could also intervene with the full performance of the participants in their workplaces.

Not Being Assigned a Task or Responsibility

Analysis of data revealed that participants were not content with the fact that they were not given tasks or responsibility. Five out of twelve participants stated that their managers or supervisors were not in favor of assigning them a task; furthermore, in case they had a task and did it repeatedly, they were condemned to do that task ever after. One participant expressed her dissatisfaction in that she was not assigned anything by her supervisor whereas even the part-time employees were done so:

It was the thing about which I was disturbed and complained most: My supervisor comes and tells my colleague "Cem, do this, enter these to the system, call these people! Ahmet, do this and that". She behaves as if I am not there. Part-time students come, for instance, she

assigns tasks even to them, she doesn't assign anything to me, it was what disturbed me most (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.43.).

The same problem was mentioned by another participant who stated that even though she was promoted some time ago, there was nothing new regarding her job description and she was not given any new responsibility:

I got promotion last September, I became customer relations specialist. However, if you ask if they have given any new responsibility, no, my job is the same, only my title has changed. I am doing the same things even though there are many things I can do for the company except the files, since there are other things but no new responsibility is given (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.44.).

Directly related to this issue, three of the participants stated that as they were not expected to do anything in the workplace and not given any tasks, they had to struggle and create tasks for themselves. Following participant indicated that because of the presence of a person with vision who did the required tasks, he was neither given a task nor taught anything related to his job. He further explained that he had to make an effort to form his own job description:

There is not a job description given to me, there are the ones I have got out. There was a contract employee when I went there, she already does everything. They need to teach me everything starting from scratch; they already need to teach everybody. They are not interested in it, the employee does not want to teach anything in order not to lose her job. As the deputy managers do not have much authority, things do not work (Metin, officer, Appendix G.45.).

Similarly, following participant stated that she preferred to do some tasks which she detected on her own in her workplace:

My supervisor did not assign a task to me for a long time; I always made up my own task. I observed the environment, I determined

which tasks I could do and I started doing those things (Asli, crew planning operator, Appendix G.46.).

To conclude, not being given a task or responsibility was one of the experiences of the participants which made them feel as if they were not regarded as real employees in their workplaces.

Ignoring their Demands

Apart from the issues mentioned above, four participants also focused on the fact that their demands which were necessary to execute the job were not taken into consideration by the authorities in their workplaces. For instance, following participant criticized her supervisor for being indifferent to her demands whereas she emphasized that as a person, she was caring and had a really good-nature:

Right now, my supervisor is a person liked by everybody; smiling, well-intentioned, she has a tender temper. She is a person who pays attention to the tables, chairs if they are on my way when I stand up and start walking, who encourages others to do so; she gets really sad when I run into the open cabinet door, she has such sensitivity; on the other hand, she is a person who terribly ignores my demands related to the work. However, what I need is not that, after a while I get accustomed to the office environment, or running into the chair or crushing my face to the cabinet door do not hurt my spirit so much, it hurts at that moment but goes by but being excluded, not being treated equally gives troubles which cannot be compensated for [...] After some time, you lose your self-confidence (Asli, crew planning operator, Appendix G.47.).

Another participant complained about the authorities in his workplace because they not only ignored his demands but also did not feel the necessity to give feedback to him about his demands:

[...] I have also communicated the same topic to my managers but I cannot get a response, they stay silent. The reason for my dissatisfaction is that I am not taken notice of as a person. I think that

they approach me seeing my impairment as an excuse for punishment. They perceive my demands, wills as a sin or a fault and they even do not feel a need to give response (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.48.).

However, participants explained that they did not feel totally desperate when their demands were not fulfilled. In contrast, they stated that they tried to solve their problems on their own through developing some formulas which was the case with the participant below who found his own solution to be able to carry out a task he had undertaken:

There is a need to read from the notebooks to enter the absences, the other employee refused to read of course, she said “Then I would do it on my own”. Now, I am solving the problem with a student. I improve formulas on my own (Metin, officer, Appendix G.49.).

Likewise, another participant explained that finding her own formulas was a part of her life. As she had little vision, she was accustomed to use small lamps during the in-class activities which enhanced her vision relatively:

As the time goes by, you generate your own formula; for instance, I have small palm lamps, they just light the area you direct, think like a lantern. I light over writing, if I want to look at a picture I keep over it; it is just in my palm size and hold like this (showing) and I can tell children. Or when children ask something, I keep over their books and even say “Look, the lamp of Alaaddin’s magic lamp” (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.50.).

Moreover, she focused on the fact that she was accustomed to struggle throughout her life as a person with visual disabilities and she made it clear that doing so was a key to being successful in such a competitive world:

You will either do everything on your own or quit this job. You have to find your own solution; you need to make much bid for everything. This was the case throughout my school life, university life, work life, and now it is. I think it will be the same for long years. If you want to

be successful, if you want to be different, then you have to struggle a lot (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.51.).

In short, analysis of data revealed that individuals with visual disabilities had some demands for a better performance in the workplace. However, some of the participants were unlucky in this respect and this encouraged them to be on their own and come up with efficient solutions to their problems.

Not Being Regarded as an Employee

During the interviews, participants put a heavy emphasis on their efforts to become integrated into their workplaces. However, four of them stated that they were not treated as if they were employees as others in the workplace. The following participant explained that even though he was the one proposing the idea and making a lot of effort on a project, he indicated that his contributions were not appreciated which, he thought, might be a consequence of his blindness:

[...] things I had exerted idea and effort while being done, I had ideas during its production [...] I think that sometimes my contributions there were not noticed. It has an aspect stemming from blindness; on the other hand, it is an administrative weakness. It is not related to blindness on its own but I think it has an influence too. For instance, even though I had put forward an idea during the production of an R & D product – I had given details, prepared outlines – I feel that such contributions were not seen and unconsciously, this pushed me not to behave proactively, either directly or indirectly. The fact that you were not seen as a person, and what is more, what you did is not regarded as (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.52.).

Another participant focused on the same issue by stating that none of her supervisors were interested in how and what they were doing as individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace:

They send messages on International Day of People with Disabilities but except for that I think that many people are not seen as employees even though they work. Not specifically but they reflect it between the lines. For example, how many managers came to our department and ask “What do you do? How do you do?” I have been there for five years, doesn’t anybody wonder how I do the job, what support I receive, how I use the computer, no one wonders. What I expect is not special interest, it just shows that it is not considered important. (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.53.).

In addition to not being regarded as an employee, she further explained that some people in their workplaces did not take notice of them even as a person:

I am aware that the manager follows but she certainly doesn’t care for, she neglects me. For example, we are sitting with you and she asks you “How are you?” Then she asks you “How is Gözde?” In other words, she pretends not to see, I think it is intentional because even though I directly look at her face, she does not count on, she does not see (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.54.).

In conclusion, some of the participants in the study expressed their discontent with the fact that they were not accepted as the employees in their workplaces despite their efforts.

Limiting Their Capabilities to Certain Tasks

Analysis of data revealed that most of the participants were directly using telephones in their jobs. In line with this finding, it was emphasized throughout the interviews that individuals with visual disabilities were generally associated with switch boarding or call center operating in recent years. However, they expressed that they were not content with the fact that people limited them to doing only these jobs regardless of their capabilities or qualifications. Following participant explained how individuals with visual disabilities were limited to certain jobs in Turkey:

There are especially 4-5 occupations for individuals with visual disabilities: if you are a person with visual disability, they call you “*Hafız*”, s/he is either a hodja who memorized Koran, either a bard playing saz, or a lawyer who finished law or a switchboard operator. There are some standards, this is related to the heavy use of the memory of individuals with visual disabilities, and they are jobs requiring memory as it is known that their memories are used (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.55.).

Another participant exemplified the same issue by telling a conversation she had with one of her teachers in the school for blind:

I was talking like “I wish I had studied this and that” and she said “Look, my daughter! Even if you finish Oxford, you cannot do anything other than switchboard operating; either teaching or switchboard operating, you can do nothing in this country. Do not dream in vain!” (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.56.).

As it was indicated by one of the participants, switch boarding became insufficient as call centers which enabled doing more tasks became widespread in organizations.

However, as call center operating requires carrying out many tasks at the same time, it was not regarded appropriate for a person who did not have vision. In addition to

indicating the association between switch boarding and this disability group,

following participant emphasized the importance of call center operating field for individuals with visual disabilities as a new area of study:

Switch boarding is one of the most common jobs for individuals with visual disabilities; I can say that as a sector, switch boarding equals to blindness, blindness equals to switch boarding. Call center is a more comprehensive job because it necessitates other skills: you talk on the phone at the same time you make a reservation, you answer other questions passenger asks, you sell tickets, you try to make them members, you try to convince passengers and you have to do all these in a certain speed and there is a number of calls expected from you. Thereby, it is a difficult sector and we asked “What are we starting for?” when we started because as long as they do not believe in, you try to question yourself, although not in the way they question you (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.57.).

During the interviews, it was mentioned by three participants that their capabilities were underestimated by others which, in turn, led to a constant need for them to prove what they could do. One participant below stated that she was not seen capable of doing a simple task like memorizing the extension numbers:

At first, there were things (I had difficulty in), once they did not know what I could do, it was a little bit difficult to tell this to them. For example, I had memorized extension numbers in one day, but for a few days I was expected to memorize, they made me sit uselessly. They understood after I showed them (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.58.).

Another participant explained that he was doing things which were not within his job description in order to demonstrate that he was capable of doing it:

[...] Except for that, as we have taken many things on as a duty in order to prove blindness, ourselves, they have become our job. In order to show that we can do many things which do not belong to us – it is generally the case with individuals with visual disabilities – they always embrace the things which are not their job. They take what they can do and they get stuck with them (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.59.).

Three participants, on the other hand, explained that as some people in their workplaces did not believe in their capabilities and they tried to prevent them from doing some of the work-related tasks. One participant indicated that the reason for him not to perform in the workplace was that he was prevented from doing so:

I am not doing it not because I cannot do it but I cannot do anything because I am prevented (Metin, officer, Appendix G.60.).

Another participant stated that this was also the case in the outside world and explained her thoughts on this topic with the following sentences:

The condition of individuals with visual disabilities is really awkward; you are quite good and successful in the eye of the society but when it comes to giving a task, they say “Please, stop!” In other words, you are appreciated a lot but in practice there are approaches like “Don’t bother” (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.61.).

To summarize, participants stated their dissatisfaction with the fact that they were not regarded as capable of carrying out certain jobs no matter what their qualifications were. As a result, they expressed that they needed to prove what they could do and what their capabilities were.

Attitudes

During the interviews, participants highlighted the attitudes of people toward their impairment in the workplace. When participants were asked about the attitude of people in their workplaces, they came up with different points all of which reflected their own feelings. However, data analysis showed that except for two participants who had extremely negative experiences, other participants stated that they had no problems in terms of personal relationships in their workplaces. Accordingly, following participant pointed out to the support she got from her colleagues and administrators and how these people enhanced her experiences and enabled her to overcome the problems:

I work with a really good administration. If they were an administration who didn’t give support, I could not have finished this year. At least, they were unbiased, believed that I could do and did their best [...] My other colleague is like having lived with individuals with visual disabilities for years; maybe they were my chance, they are a little bit different from the society in general. Other teachers in my school also try to be helpful as much as they can (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.62.).

On the other hand, what they focused on was the attitude of people in terms of their capabilities and the belief in their value as employees some of which were already implied in the previous parts.

To begin with, when the participants compared the attitude of people when they first started the job and at the time of the interviews, nine participants stated that they felt a change in the viewpoints of their colleagues and managers' in terms of their impairment even though one participant stated that this change was rather slow unlike her expectations. The fact that their impairment was the reason for their life-long struggle and they were familiar with this adaptation period was emphasized by the following participant below:

After a while, people also get accustomed to. At first, there may be many problems, they can get surprised, there can be "How he can use computer even though he cannot see?" or there can be people saying "Why did they employ them here?" Struggling is a part of our lives but immediate people already get used to. We have nothing to do with the ones who don't, we get along with the ones at hand (Tarik, call center operator, Appendix G.63.).

Similarly, one participant explained how people were unaware about the capabilities of individuals with visual disabilities to the degree that they questioned her other senses:

S/he doesn't see but can do something, just doesn't see, his/ her mind works, hands work. They even doubted that I could hear. I and my father were talking to the manager, he asked to my father if I could hear them. They need to become conscious about it (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.64.).

Another participant pointed out below to the effect of his impairment on people related to his professional achievements and explained how people in the society evaluate blindness:

I generally come across things related to blindness, if I weren't a person with visual disabilities, I would like to organize more active meetings and make presentations but it seems to me that my blindness prevents it. For example, we talk on the phone well, I tell the products etc., s/he gets impressed and s/he doesn't know that I am a person with visual disabilities. Let's say, we arrange a meeting, we go, when s/he sees that I have vision impairment, s/he surprises a lot. Some people regard blindness as supernatural, there happens a disappointment when they see impairment (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.65.).

Whereas seven participants explained that they had good social relationships in their workplaces, some of them put a heavy emphasis on the effect of the personal characteristics of themselves. Furthermore, some others distinguished between the attitudes of their colleagues and managers mentioning that the attitudes of colleagues were more prone to change because of closer relationships during their daily life. This case was supported by the following participant who developed a more active role to overcome the possible negative effects of her administrators' behavior:

Colleagues look at your works, s/he sees that you do the same job; thus, it does not create a big problem but the attitudes of administrators sometimes affect employees. You have to be so dominant that they will not be affected by the attitudes of administrators. I have struggled a lot because I knew that they would be affected sooner or later but I tried to play a more active role than my administrators. I tried to be so much active as my administrators ignore me (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.66.).

One participant explained that they were the ones who experienced the first encounters in the workplace as individuals with visual disabilities. He expressed his belief in the fact that prospective employees with visual disabilities would not experience similar things:

Before us, there were not employees with visual disabilities here. It will be easier if people are employed after us (Tarık, call center operator, Appendix G.67.).

Another participant, however, stated that even though she had no problems related to her colleagues or administrators, her major problems stem from the attitudes of students' parents:

[...] but here you constantly have to strive against students' parents. You have to explain something and it is always thought that it stems from the fact that you are a person with little vision. However, such things are experienced even in a class of a sighted person, these things happen, I definitely don't deny, it is a little bit more risky as a person with little vision but it is not a thing that doesn't happen. If it happens three times in a class of a sighted person, it happens five times in my class (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.68.).

On the other hand, two of the participants used "mobbing" to describe some of their experiences in the workplace emphasizing their belief in that they were exposed to these behavior due to their impairment. One participant described his negative experiences as follows:

Working alone, being left alone in the workplace, being left alone both in terms of your demands and in that people leave you out of their communication; in other words, the fact that they pal up with each other. My table is in one corner, my colleagues are a group of seven, they are together and seated facing me back. There are two air conditioners above them so that they feel relieved in case it becomes hot; I am on my own in my side, hot weather disturbs, I hear the conversation among them all the day; actually, what I experience is mobbing (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.69.).

To summarize, participants of the study heavily focused on the attitudes of people in the workplace through several examples. Nevertheless, their focus clustered around the attitudes related to their capabilities as employees which were thought to result from their impairment.

Physical Conditions

When the participants were asked about the difficulties which were encountered due to the physical conditions, eight of them directly mentioned the significance of physical environment. They came up with various issues and explained that physical conditions affected the way they maintained their jobs in varying degrees.

However, it was one of the participants working as a pre-school teacher that physical conditions played a vital role for her because of the responsibility she had while executing her job:

For example, I am a person with little vision; actually I can use my vision more efficiently in a light environment. For instance, this environment could be dim for me but I could move easily in a more lighted environment, I could use my vision more comfortably; and this would make me less dependent on a person with vision. However, the class I work in now is in the basement and you have to go down the stairs. The problem is not going down the stairs but the class is very dark. There is a door in front of the class and if a child gets out of that door, s/he is just in front of the stairs and when s/he goes there, that the gate is open and the probability of being that gate open and the child going out are stressful things. If the physical conditions were better, much better things could be done (Beyza, pre-school teacher, Appendix G.70.).

Another participant, on the other hand, expressed his dissatisfaction in the workplace through a list of issues which made his workplace experiences even more painful:

Moreover, there are other things which disturb me right now: the place I work in is unventilated, rather cramped, a boxy room. Voices disturb a lot because it is a closed room, I have difficulty in breathing, it smells, we are working 7-8 people there. There is not an air conditioner or a propeller which will cool the area; I really work in a disturbing environment (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.71.).

Moreover, another participant stated that even though she did not have major troubles about the physical conditions, the building she worked in was not

appropriate for individuals with disabilities. In addition, she attributed the problems she encountered to her personal characteristics:

There are not (problems) for me, entrances and exits are quite comfortable but when an examination made, I cannot say that restrooms are suitable for individuals with impairments – for individuals with orthopedic disabilities. For me, for example, they have made some decorations with flowers in the office we work in – actually maybe they are beautiful but it is already a cramped area and I am a really dynamic person, I move very quickly while walking and I crash my arm, elbow or wrist. However, I cannot say that there are extreme physical problems. The tables are very close to each other, I have difficulty in terms of the area to pass through. That could also stem from restlessness but the space is a little bit narrow (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.72.).

Similarly, another participant focused on the inconvenience of the building of the company not just for individuals with visual disabilities but also for individuals with other disabilities:

It [building] was not built considering the individuals with disabilities. Elevators, for example, do not talk; they tell the floors in some shopping centers, they do not here. I am mistaken there, I cannot know in which floor I am. Individuals with physical abilities work too – without limbs or hands. They built slopes in some places for wheelchair. Ok, this is well-thought but there is a system in our company: we have to swipe our cards while entering, doors are opened by cards but a wheelchair cannot pass through there, there is such a trouble. There are doors like hospital doors, they are opened when pushed. However, wheelchair cannot pass through because they always lock one of them. When the door is locked, you have to push the other one (İbrahim, call center operator, Appendix G.73.).

However, pointing out to the fact that he was working in an organization which provides service to the public, one participant mentioned the problems regarding physical conditions not just for individuals with impairment who work there but also for people who go there to receive service:

There are elevators in the institutions but they do not talk, they are not suitable for individuals with visual disabilities. There are not embossing cautionary signals, there are not between floor maps, cautionary notes or points in the floors. In other words, there is not sufficiency related to the accessibility of individuals with disabilities by no means, that is of course a big trouble and we overcome it by using a person who has vision, we call them live cane, or through memorizing, what we call becoming accustomed to [...] The place where we work in, it is a place where we have been going for 10 years, you memorize everywhere out of necessity, you learn it. Maybe there is not a need for a white cane or a person but citizens may also come here – individuals with disabilities – this is a problem for them because they do not have to get accustomed to there. His work there is maybe one or two hours, she does not have to memorize everywhere for two hours (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.74.).

However, three participants emphasized that physical conditions were not a big deal for individuals with visual disabilities because there were other things which had priority for better workplace experiences. One participant indicated that these problems could be overcome after some time if individuals with impairments had mobility:

A person with a disability who has independent action can adjust to every environment – if s/he does not have another disability like walking, hearing – does not need very special arrangements. We do not either, I adapted to the building, office environment easily after wandering around (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.75.).

Throughout the interviews, it was clear that the law passed in 2005 which enforces some regulations regarding the physical conditions of the institutions was not executed adequately in public or private organizations. However, one of the participants explained that the period of implementation given to the institutions to make required changes was seven years and this would end in 2012 which would possibly bring about an action period on behalf of the individuals with disabilities:

We do not need to demand for [changes], there is a law passed in 2005 [Turkish Disability Act] and it has a period of seven years. All public

organizations have to be suited to individuals with disabilities, they run out of date in 2012. After 2012, unions we belong to will start legal proceedings about these institutions. There is a general law about individuals with impairment – it is there. Development Plan Law is about public improvements; namely, not only buildings or roads, it is something including pavements, everything (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.76.).

As for the suggestions of the participants about the changes in the physical environment, it was clear that most of them clustered around the issues which would make their better integration into the workplace rather than enhancing their performance while executing their jobs. These issues consisted of elevators with sound system, embossed floor numbers and road maps, air conditioner, seating order, decorations and dining hall. On the other hand, issues related to the execution of the job were focused on by four of the participants and they were Braille printer, adequate lighting, Braille monitor, and the use of an electronic system for carrying out the job.

As was explained by one participant below, making some arrangements which take their needs into account was one way of making individuals with impairments feel included in the company and feel as a real employee there:

[...] elevators were being changed at one stage, we had such a demand: “Since they are being changed, make them with sound system”. The fact that they had sound system made our job easier, you find a solution, you can ask in which floor you are when you get on the elevator or you even know that it will go to the floor you pressed; they are not important, we already experience these in other environments but it makes you feel belonged to there once the elevators are with sound system. It is not difficult for such big companies. We wanted such a change and it was done (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.77.).

In addition to adding some other things which could be done in the workplace, the same participant still emphasized the significance of issues related to work:

There could be numbers which we could understand by touching in the floors [...] The front door of the office is glass, a different luminous color could make my job easier [...] Extra things could be asked for, could be realized but our struggle is first adapting to that environment, being included. It is only possible that you are included when you do the same job. (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.78.).

All in all, participants of the study expressed that problems regarding the physical environment had also impact on their workplace experiences. Issues uttered by the participants were varied and included things such as elevators, seating arrangement, and floors. Nonetheless, most of the participants assessed the institutions as being far from fulfilling the requirements mentioned in the law; thus, they were inadequate in terms of providing needed services.

Learning Experiences in the Workplace

In this part of the study, formal and informal learning experiences of the participants in the workplace are presented. In addition, their learning sources are also provided within the scope of informal learning experiences.

Formal Learning Experiences in the Workplace

For the participants who took part in the study, formal learning experiences were significant to carry out their jobs. Nine out of twelve participants expressed that they had participated in formal learning activities in their workplaces. However, only few of the programs were found to be useful because these were the ones which were prepared taking the vision impairment of the participants into account.

During the interviews, several formal learning activities were mentioned by the participants. Participants working in public organizations mainly focused on an

occupational training program which was given at the beginning of their career and in-service training programs which were imposed by the authorities and implemented all around the country. Participants working in private organizations, on the other hand, emphasized the presence of personal development seminars and online training programs which aimed at regularly updating the knowledge of employees about their jobs so that they could carry out their jobs more effectively.

In Turkey, for employees working in public organizations, laws enforce a preliminary training program which consists of three steps: basic, preparatory and applied training. In these trainings, newly-recruited personnel are provided with necessary information about being a government official including their roles and responsibilities, their rights and related legislation. Six of the participants in the study had been working in public organizations and four of them stated that they had taken this training. The content of this training program was expressed by the following participant as follows:

When I started my job, I attended occupational training program. You learn the rules of being a governmental officer (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.79.).

Even though the main objective of this training was to prepare employees for their occupational life, general idea was that it just provided theoretical information and did not have practical value. The programs were criticized by the participants because they were neither presented competently nor appropriate for individuals with visual disabilities as it was stated below:

I attended occupational training programs and they were mainly about legislation and even that was not presented accurately. People in charge were not competent and they directed us to read the related laws on our own and frequently said “The laws could have changed, go and read them” (Metin, officer, Appendix G.80.).

However, two of the participants were not involved in such training because they had been working in their workplaces for more than 10 years and this program was not compulsory when they first started working:

On the other hand, five out of six participants working in private organizations indicated that they were involved in a training program when they first started their job which was vital for them to carry out their jobs. Furthermore, two of the participants stated that it was these programs which completely prepared them for their current jobs:

We had taken one-month training about the programs. There were also conversation techniques, we were trained about a lot of things – it took a month. Then we started getting calls. It contributed a lot, I learned everything there (Ibrahim, call center operator, Appendix G.81.).

The other participant also explained that they were taught everything in these preliminary training programs as to the execution of their jobs:

When we started the job, we went through a 3-month training program; we got rid of all our troubles there. Normal training period for the bank is two or three weeks; however, ours took 3 months. It is nearly three times more, it was for three people. It was planned down to the last detail, we even made testing calls. Namely, we overcame a lot of difficulties there [...] The training program which was given to us when we first came was totally about the bank; systems, finance or procedures, rules of the company, what we should talk about. It was impossible to start working without getting that training (Tarık, call center operator, Appendix G.82).

However, one of the participants among the ones working in private organizations expressed that he had not taken any kind of formal training when he first started working although the company normally had training programs for new comers.

I did not get any training in the workplace; normally they train new employees – even the ones working in switchboard – but they did not call me. There was neither an orientation program, they just left me in a room on the first day (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.83.).

Even though formal learning programs were considered as vital by some of the participants, some others thought that they were useless since the programs were visual in essence. That is, none of the participants were given a training program that was basically prepared for individuals with visual disabilities which was also expressed by the following participant:

We get online training programs but these are not accessible because jaws (the narrator program) cannot process the visual items inserted in the programs. That is why; we need someone to complete those trainings. We wrote several petitions but nothing has been done. However, I want to make use of these programs but in this way, it is impossible. So, I have not taken the latest programs because I want to complete them on my own (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.84.).

Another participant also explained that she did not like attending these programs as they were not effective for her because of her impairment:

I participate in the compulsory training programs. Up to now, just two of them were good because they presented valuable information. However, I do not like going to the ones related to English teaching because they just use visual materials and I remember nothing (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.85.).

During the interviews, participants also stated that the programs were prepared for all employees mainly using visual materials. As it was mentioned by the following

participant, it was believed that providing individuals with visual disabilities with materials appropriate to their impairment would help them make the most of these training programs:

There was an orientation program, it was for everyone. However, the problem was that the documents which were distributed were not accessible for me. Thus, I wanted them in electronic format. They did nothing special for me (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.86.).

Two other participants also underlined the insufficiency of some of the training programs because of implementing visual materials as the basic tool. As a result, they expressed their reluctance to take part in such training programs.

One or two years ago, there was a training program about the use of the office programs. It was organized by the company; however, I did not participate in. It was for everyone but I decided not to take part in because I thought it was not appropriate for my impairment (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.87.).

Another participant, furthermore, stated her unwillingness to participate in such seminars since she knew how these were inadequate to meet her needs thanks to her previous experiences:

For example, when we were at the university, we went to seminars at private schools, it was the case there, they were teaching really visual games, I could not learn much. Actually I am a bit biased against going to such seminars now; I will go, there will be many visuals because visuality is very important there (İpek, English language teaching, Appendix G.88.).

Results of the interviews also showed that the quality and the frequency of the formal learning activities were in line with the corporate identity of the organizations. In other words, private organizations paid more attention to the formal learning activities in the workplace when compared to the public organizations. Following

participant reports the significance of these trainings in terms of constructing an effective impression on the clients:

We constantly need to update ourselves about our job; the price of the operation may change; we need to answer when the client asks; otherwise, when the client understands that you are not sure, it is not a good attitude either for you or the bank (Tarik, call center operator, Appendix G.89.).

The interviews demonstrated that formal learning experiences were limited for individuals with visual disabilities both in public and private organizations mainly due to lack of programs matched with their impairment. However, when they were asked what made it possible for them to carry out their jobs, they pointed out to their previous experiences and rehabilitation programs which they had participated in before starting work as it was the case with the participant below:

I got rehabilitation training, I could use white cane, I could write, I could do some things related to daily living skills. I was not inactive at these topics, related to daily living skills – ironing, cooking, getting - I overcame these on my own but rehabilitation gives you confidence. Actually, after completing rehabilitation training, I thought “Why did not I use this cane?” When there is an organization called rehabilitation, there is a thought like you could settle up some things when you finish it. Going to there was like an obligation, the person who advised the rehabilitation to us did it in this way. I was in need of making some changes related to my life because of this after going to the rehabilitation (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.90.).

Accordingly, three out of six university graduates also stressed out the contribution of their majors. For them, what they had learned at the university was useful in terms of forming a basis to the solution of their problems. One participant reported the effect of her department as follows:

I have not taken any training while working. My major contributed a lot. What I learned at the university does not overlap but certainly it helps (Beyza, pre-school education teacher, Appendix G.91.).

Another participant stated that it was not the training programs she attended but her major which facilitated her workplace experiences:

I think it was my major which contributed to my workplace experiences, not the trainings I took part in. I feel that my education supports it academically. People also have similar feedbacks on this topic (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.92.).

In addition to emphasizing the contribution of her undergraduate studies, one of the participants stated that she built up her own ways in time as follows:

Some of the techniques contributed, it could have been really difficult if I had not known anything. I use what I learned at the university, I mean the techniques, but after a while you have your own style perhaps (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.93.).

Considering the lack or inefficiency of formal training programs, participants were asked if they had any demands as to getting training in the workplace in order to execute their jobs effectively. Six of the participants expressed that they had such claims. However, only one of the participants stated that his requests were taken into account by his company:

There were demands related to job. For instance, we have trainings about cards or card sales when we demand. As banking needs education and updating, we have online training systems from time to time. For example, some of them are not accessible – they are done through websites, there are visuals with flash – our friends read them to us (Tarik, call center operator, Appendix G.94.).

Remaining five participants expressed diverse reactions to their demands all of which were negative in essence. One participant told that they had problems related to the use of the main software program utilized in the company and online training

programs and wanted some changes. However, she was ignored and she believed that it was because people were ignorant while doing their jobs:

We said “We get these trainings with the help of some people, we need to do something.” We wrote petition, nothing has been done. They are not considered important because people do their job irrelevantly, even other employees (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.95.).

Another participant having serious problems with his company stated that all of his demands both in terms of trainings and materials were ignored. As it was indicated by him below, he was having difficulty because of this issue:

There is not communication [...] I said it, I still say it; I conveyed my latest demand, nothing has changed in my situation. I think they do not see me even as a detail, they do not think about my words or wills (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.96.).

Furthermore, one of the participants said that his claims were not considered by his managers either. He stated that there was a paid worker in his workplace and he had sincere relationships with the administration. The participant believed that it was the presence of this person which encouraged others to ignore him because he could do the job there instead of him:

I told deputy managers several times to teach me some of the things. As I said, they put me off because there is someone right now who does the job for them. (Metin, officer, Appendix G.97.).

Six of the participants, however, expressed that they did not have such kinds of demands in the workplace. The main reason for this was the fact that they did not believe in the usefulness of these trainings:

There were potential training programs – such as advanced use of Excel or power point – but I myself did not want because the organization or the person presenting the material was not related to vision impairment. As I thought that they could not tell me [...] As the

organizations do not take care of accessibility of individuals with disabilities, I have not demanded (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.98.).

Only one of the participants said that he did not had a training demand because he thought his company had provided him with everything ne needed in the training program which was given when he first started his job:

I have not had a demand, they have already taught everything. They have thought everything convenient for us – beforehand, what can be done – we are trained accordingly (İbrahim, call center operator, Appendix G.99.).

In short, participants stated that they had some form of formal learning during their occupational life. However, results of the interviews showed that these formal learning experiences were insufficient for the participants to carry out their jobs since their impairment was not taken into consideration while these programs were being prepared. Finally, half of the participants stated that they had demanded some training in the workplace but they were also not met by their organizations.

Informal Learning Experiences in the Workplace

During the interviews, it was clear that participants of the study had gone through formal learning experiences. However, most of them stated that those training programs were not in compliance with their needs and expectations since their impairment was not considered. Accordingly, most of the participants mentioned their own efforts to learn necessary skills to execute their jobs. In other words, informal learning appeared as the fundamental way of learning in the workplace for individuals with visual disabilities in this study.

Two basic categories of informal learning emerged as the result of a closer look at the interviews with the participants: informal learning on their own and informal learning from other people. These categories were also determined by Eraut (2004), Altay (2007) and Çimen (2009) as different forms of informal learning experiences in the workplace. Details of these categories are provided in the following part.

Informal Learning on Their Own

Participants in the study made it clear that most of their learning in the workplace was without the help of other people. Based on the interviews with the participants, three codes emerged under this category which were exploration, on the job learning, and deduction from previous experiences.

Regardless of their jobs and the type of the organizations, exploration was mentioned as the most common informal learning activity in the workplace. On the other hand, on the job learning and deduction from previous experiences were mentioned by relatively fewer participants as a way of informal learning in the workplace. Each of these strategies was presented in the next section along with the quotations from the participants.

Exploration

Exploration referred to the informal learning activity in which the participants engaged in self-directed learning strategies which are necessary for them to effectively carry out their jobs. Ten participants stated that exploration was the main strategy they used when they realized that they did not have required skills or

knowledge while performing their jobs as was the case with the following participant:

If it is something I can achieve, I search and learn on my own (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.100.).

Another participant also explained that he tried to obtain the information he needed on his own:

Generally, I search at first; what it is, if there is something I can achieve, if there are resources everybody can achieve [...] There is not a routine, this gives you time to improve yourself related to work. I have learned more by planning personally (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.101.).

Among the strategies exploited by the participants, the use of the Internet and trial and error were found to be the basic categories of exploration.

The Use of the Internet

After data analysis, the use of the Internet was found to be the most prevalent source of learning. Seven participants showed their preference to use the Internet when they needed new information which was necessary for them to perform their jobs. Two participants stated that the Internet was the preliminary source of learning for them to see if there is something useful when they needed new information as it was explained by the following participant:

First of all, I look into the Internet if there is anything to do that job (Metin, officer, Appendix G.102.).

One participant expressed the significance of the Internet for her because she could adapt what she found to use it in the class:

I worked in special training, I used my knowledge but I was not a teacher of a pre-school class; consequently, you need to search for something in the Internet and try to adapt it to real life; it needs to be concrete for me because if it is concrete, I will understand it better. (Beyza, pre-school education teacher, Appendix G.103.).

Similarly, another participant highlighted the fact that she turned to the Internet when she was in need of ready-made materials because it was challenging for her to prepare visual materials on her own to be used in the classroom:

Sometimes I use them when I find some visual things. Either I prepare myself or there are worksheets which I find on the Internet (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.104.).

Another participant pointed out to the prominence of the Internet as a source of learning especially in case of a need to find information in a short time:

When there is a need for urgent information, there is the Internet; accessible system also exists within the bank (Tarik, call center operator, Appendix G.105.).

Considering the insufficiency of the materials written in Braille format, reading was only mentioned by two of the participants along with the Internet. One of them emphasized the importance of the tutorials which presented the information he needed in order to effectively execute his job:

I have learned the information which I need to perform my job by reading on my own, reading the tutorials when I need, not by getting a regular training but by identifying them on my own (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.106.).

All in all, the Internet was the main source of information for the participants of the study when they needed new skills or knowledge while carrying out their jobs. In this respect, the importance of the narrator was undeniable on behalf of the participants

because it was the narrator which made the widespread use of the Internet in the workplace possible.

Trial and error

Following the use of the Internet, trial and error was found to be the second strategy utilized by the participants. In this strategy, participants attempted to do their job not by having exact knowledge but by trying to do it on their own and come to a solution. Five participants in the study mentioned that they made use of trial and error when they had to do something on their own for the first time. One participant said that before everything else, he tried to find it on his own:

First, I fiddle with it, sometimes our screens change [...] First of all, I try to do it (İbrahim, call center operator, Appendix G.107.).

One of the participants, however, focused on the available time and said that if there was enough time, she would try on her own to find a way to do her job:

If it is not an urgent situation to be taken care of, if I have time, then I try to do it on my own (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.108.).

Another participant stated that the type of the switchboards were different in the rehabilitation center and the workplace. However, he made an analogy between a cell phone and a switchboard and he told that it was trial and error which made him learn how to use the switchboard in the workplace:

We had already taken switchboard training at the school, we knew a little; however, the switchboard which was used in the training and the switchboard I use in the workplace were not the same. After all, a normal telephone is in front of you just like every other person but it is a little bit different, suppose it like a cell phone. You buy a new cell phone, you do not know how to use it, when you use it through trial

and error, you learn it in time; it is the same [...] No one starts the job by knowing the properties of the switchboard, day by day, through trial and error (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.109.).

In short, trial and error was commonly used by the participants as a way to reach required skills or information.

On the Job Learning

On the job learning referred to the informal learning activities in which the participants learned how to perform their jobs while they were working on assigned tasks. In this respect, six participants stressed out the fact that most of their work-related knowledge was a result of on the job learning as the following participant stated:

They had told some things in the rehabilitation center but it was not necessary because you can learn when you start working (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.110.).

Another participant also explained that even though he had a certificate about switch boarding, he had to learn everything from the scratch in the workplace:

I had taken switchboard certificate in the rehabilitation center which took 6 months. It was not enough for the workplace, I knew how to use the switchboard but it is a workplace, there are different units. What does each unit do? I learned these while I was working there. It took me 1.5 years to completely learn (Ozan, switchboard operator, Appendix G.111.).

One of the participants who worked as a teacher in a public school pointed out to the fact that learning the job while performing it is more different even if there were former trainings or experiences. She had studied in a faculty of education and went through a teacher training program; however, she expressed the difference between

being a teacher trainee and a real teacher in terms of the assumed responsibility as follows:

As I said, you go to the schools as a teacher trainee but you are more like an observer, eventually that class has a teacher; going to the class as an assistant is different, being the teacher of that class is completely different [...] you are the one known as the teacher and whatever you do will turn back to you either as true or false (Beyza, pre-school education teacher, Appendix G.112.).

On the other hand, another participant, emphasizing the inadequacy of the formal training given at the beginning, expressed that she learned how to perform in the workplace after she started working:

Normally this should be done: special classes would be created for us, jaws would be installed, and the program should be taught to us step by step. However, nothing similar was done and consequently, those training programs meant nothing for me. I actually learned the program when I went to call center and installed my computer (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.113.).

One of the participants also stated that despite the presence of training programs, it took her some time to differentiate between different tasks and how to behave in certain situations:

Right now, I know what the subject is about and whom I should turn to; I either go to that unit or direct to them. If it is something I have to answer, I learn wherever I should do and direct or if it is something I could not answer immediately, I can say "I will call you later" (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.114.).

To summarize, despite previous experiences or qualifications, on the job learning was regarded as an important way of informal learning in the workplace.

Deduction from Previous Experiences

Deduction was the least mentioned strategy by the participants as a way to learn informally. In this strategy, participants tried to find an answer to their questions depending on their previous experiences. For three of the participants in the study, previous experiences shed light on the new tasks as it was expressed by one of the participants:

[...] my previous experiences were also useful (Beyza, pre-school education teacher, Appendix G.115.).

Another participant stated that the familiarity of the topic gave her some ideas about the task at hand and in this way it was possible for her to come to a solution:

I can deduct if the topic is familiar. For example, I can deduct from previous experiences or the topics I learned before. I can say that “Previously, this had been experienced and as a result we had done that” and I can come up with new deductions (Ashi, crew planning operator, Appendix G.116.).

On the other hand, one of the participants expressed his initial experiences as a way to build up a store of knowledge for the upcoming tasks:

In the past, how we solve this, what the problem is, what can be done, I used to struggle to somehow find a solution. How is this done? What can be done if a similar thing happens to me? I will learn it so that if such a thing occurs again, I will not lose such time or do not go through such trouble. I used to put that information into my storage (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.117.).

To sum up, previous experiences of the participants also contributed to their treatment to the new situation in the form of deduction.

Informal Learning from Other People

Based on the interviews with the participants of the study, it was obvious that they learn informally through other people in the workplace in addition to their own learning strategies. Within the study, basic informal learning activities were asking others and mentoring whereas basic learning sources were colleagues, managers and other individuals with visual disabilities.

Asking others

During the interviews, asking questions was mentioned as the basic way of learning from other people in the workplace. Nine participants mentioned that they asked questions when they needed some skills or information as was emphasized by the following participant:

I learned everything through asking [...] I come across a question on the phone. I ask my manager or more experienced colleagues. I learned in that way (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.118.).

One of the participants, who firstly preferred to explore the topic on her own, said that the urgency of the problem encouraged her to apply asking as a way of informal learning as follows:

If the subject is to be handled immediately, I consult someone who knows best and ask him/her to solve and help (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.119.).

However, one of the participants who stated his preference to use the Internet as a main source of learning said that in case he could not find answers on the Internet, he would ask someone who could answer his question:

[...] if I cannot find, I ask someone – someone whom I think can know the answer. If they cannot answer, I call the district director of national education and ask them (Metin, officer, Appendix G.120.).

The same order was also mentioned by another participant who stated the Internet as the initial source which was followed by the people in the workplace as expressed below:

[...] there are many people around us, when we stand up they come. Either our manager or someone else, there is not a problem about it, we already find urgent information. The Internet is the main source, and then comes people (Tarık, call center operator, Appendix G.121.).

When the participants were asked about the addressee of their questions, they came up with different people in the workplace. For most of them, it was important that the person be knowledgeable about the task as it was stated below:

Whoever is proficient in that topic [...] If I see a person is really successful in that specific area and if I know that, I do not hesitate and take it as a matter of pride and go and ask (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.122.).

Another participant stated that he would consult someone who had experienced a similar problem so that he was sure to get an answer:

If I think there is a person who knows – if this person has encountered it before – I can ask my manager or any other person experienced in this topic (Ömer, product manager, Appendix G.123.).

Five of the participants indicated that they mainly asked their questions to their colleagues as was expressed by the following participants:

At first, I did not know how to connect people. I asked one of my colleagues what the officers do. I learned from my colleagues (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.124.).

Another participant, on the other hand, stated that she could ask anybody when she had difficulty in performing the task:

I certainly ask about a situation which I cannot handle; if I can determine from whom I can learn it best, I definitely ask for help. It could be my friends or I can prefer people close to administration or personnel (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.125.).

One of the participants told that when he first started the job, he did not know from whom he could get answers and as a result, he would call each and every unit to find solutions to his problems:

[...] I used to ask all the units which I can take related information about this or all the people until I find the correct place (Kemal, switchboard operator, Appendix G.126.).

On the one hand, one participant made it clear that proximity was the main criterion for her to ask questions when she needed help. That is, she would ask her questions to the closest person:

At first, I used to ask people closest to me; later on, I started to find related people (Aşlı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.127.).

On the other hand, another participant focused on the availability of people around him while deciding to ask questions:

I find if I can; if I cannot find it, I ask. Whoever is available around because people are generally on the phone; if I cannot find them, I ask team leaders, if it is not possible I find someone (İbrahim, call center operator, Appendix G.128.).

For two of the participants in the study, other individuals with visual disabilities were a source of learning as well, as it was mentioned by one of the participants:

First of all, I ask other people around who have visual disabilities, I get their opinions (Ozan, switchboard operator, Appendix G.129.).

Another participant also focused on such interactions among individuals with visual disabilities. She told that individuals with visual disabilities generally learn from each other even outside of their workplace:

We have such a thing among ourselves, among individuals with visual disabilities: “I have this, do you have?” (İpek, English language teacher, Appendix G.130.).

Asking questions was commonly employed by the participants in the study as a way to learn informally. However, one of the participants said that even though he tried to learn through asking it was impossible for him because people were not willing to share their knowledge. As a result, he tried to learn by means of listening to other people:

There are some issues and details in the bank which necessitate proficiency. I asked but I could not get answers, I tried to learn some things by listening to the things talked around. Asking does not work; I tried to learn what banking is and how it is done by listening to the conversations of people. I still have inadequate information (Burak, switchboard operator, Appendix G.131.).

Similarly, another participant who also used asking as a strategy mentioned that she observed what people did while they were answering her questions. In this way, it was possible for her to behave appropriately when she encountered a similar problem in the future:

[...] because some people do not like sharing information, while s/he is solving the problem, I do not go away, I definitely follow him/her. Who and where s/he called, how s/he did, which strategy s/he followed, what s/he said to the customer, how s/he behaved. I look at all, I observe (Gözde, customer relations expert, Appendix G.132.).

To summarize, participants mentioned asking questions as their initial preference for learning from others who are mainly colleagues, managers and others with visual disabilities.

Mentoring

Within the study, mentoring also emerged as a type of informal learning activity. In mentoring, people show their colleagues how to carry out their jobs or deal with a task. Three people in the study stated that mentoring played a role in their learning process. However, only two of the participants indicated that it was organized by the administration so that they learned the job as it was explained by the following participant:

Actually, I got switchboard operating training here. The training was like this: there was a person who knew, she was carrying out my job before me, she showed me. It is already a small switchboard; that is why, it was not difficult (Melike, switchboard operator, Appendix G.133.).

However, another participant emphasized that mentoring was not enforced by the administration in her case but initiated by a volunteer colleague:

Actually, there is not a regular training for anybody, they are just sat next to a person who knows the job, this person observes for a few days; however, nobody sat next to me. I had such a volunteer colleague but he was voluntary not directed by the manager – normally managers direct them. It was not the case for me. My colleague came and told me some of the things out of his own interest and will (Aslı, crew planning operator, Appendix G.134.).

All in all, participants mentioned mentoring as an alternative activity for informal learning even though it was not highly prevalent.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section covers the summary and discussion of the findings along with conclusion and suggestions. Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also presented.

Summary and Discussion

This study explored the workplace experiences of individuals with visual disabilities along with a focus on their learning experiences. The study was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews with twelve individuals with visual disabilities who were working either in public or private organizations when the interviews took place. The data was analyzed by the researcher using a content analysis method in which themes, dimensions and codes were identified for a better presentation of the findings.

In this study, there were five female and seven male participants who were between the ages of 20 and 36 years old. Along with the purpose of the study, half of the participants were high-school graduates while the others were university graduates. Among the university graduates, three participants were enrolled in a master's program. The participants having university degrees had varied educational backgrounds; however, most of them did not have jobs in their own field. When data was analyzed, it appeared that the level of education did not have a direct influence on the employment of individuals with visual disabilities in Turkey as it was also stated by Kelley (2001) and La Grow (2004). On the other hand, it should be noted

that participants with high educational level seemed to be more aware of their capabilities which enabled them to look for alternative solutions to their problems.

The most experienced participant had thirteen years of experience whereas the least experienced participant had been working for seven months. Regardless of their educational background and the type of organization, participants of the study emphasized the importance of having a job to be a member of society which was also highlighted by Arthur & Zarb (1995), Thornton & Lunt (1995), and Gillies et al. (1998). Moreover, participants of the study emphasized that job finding was a difficult period for them because of their impairment which was also discussed in the research by Gillies et al. (1998) in which the participants expressed their opinion as to being in a disadvantaged position in terms of available employment opportunities.

During the interviews, participants stated that despite their qualifications and skills, they were mainly working as either switchboard or call center operators which did not require many skills. Accordingly, Barnes (1992) explained that individuals with disabilities were generally working in low skilled and low status jobs which were regarded as unrewarding or undemanding by most people. Furthermore, Thornton & Lunt (1995) also discussed that individuals with disabilities are engaged in jobs which do not match with their skills and this was also mentioned by some of the participants in the study.

In terms of the required skills and knowledge, participants focused on the importance of having a good command of computer which was accompanied by narrator, a software program which vocalized the screen for individuals with visual disabilities (Crudden et al. 1998, Kelley, 2001, McDonnall and Crudden, 2009, Naraine, 2005). In addition to assistive technologies, work-related knowledge and communicational skills were also mentioned during the interviews. Furthermore,

Braille was not considered an important skill because of the lack of materials in the appropriate format.

Analysis of data revealed that finding a job was a great challenge for individuals with visual disabilities in a world where vision had utmost significance. However, it was not an end to the struggles because of the post-employment barriers which hinder them from being integrated into the workplace. It was also discussed by Arthur & Zarb (1995) who stated that because of the competitiveness of the labor market, retaining a job was as challenging as finding it for individuals with visual disabilities.

Throughout the interviews, participants' discussions mainly clustered around three codes: work-related, attitudinal and physical issues. To begin with the work-related issues, participants especially emphasized the prevalence of discrimination in the workplace in which their impairment was thought to be the main reason as it was also discussed by Wolffe & Spungin (2002). On the other hand, some participants also mentioned affirmative action in which discrimination was thought to be positive and for the good of individuals with visual disabilities. However, not all participants were happy with these actions due to the discriminatory nature of the given chances.

Participants also expressed the issues related to the execution of the jobs due to their impairment. That they were not assigned a task or responsibility and their demands were ignored by the authorities were also stressed out during the interviews. Furthermore, participants were discontent with the fact that people limited their capabilities so that they were only seen appropriate for jobs such as switchboard or call center operators. The fact that individuals with visual disabilities were limited to certain jobs was also pointed out in a survey conducted by Wolffe & Spungin (2002)

who stated that occupational opportunities given to individuals with visual disabilities were restrained even in developed countries.

In line with the findings of the study, it was important to note that neither public nor private organizations had made accommodations considering the needs of individuals with visual disabilities before their employment. Furthermore, some participants emphasized that they were just employed to fulfill the quota scheme which was enforced by the laws and even their job descriptions were not identified when they started their job. Accordingly, as it was also mentioned by Keller et al. (1999), participants further stated that they felt as if they were not regarded as employees who contributed to the production in the workplace.

As for the attitudinal problems, except for two of them, participants stated that they did not have problems related to social relationships. However, what disturbed them was the fact that they were not believed to function as other employees in the workplace. Therefore, negative attitudes of people in the workplace appeared as an important barrier for individuals with visual disabilities which was also mentioned by Moore & Spungin (1997), Smith (2002) and Naraine (2005) in their studies in which they listed the barriers to the representation of individuals with visual disabilities.

Moreover, participants made it clear that there appeared to be a positive change in people's attitude when they got to know individuals with visual disabilities and observed that they could also contribute to production. This was in line with the research of Wolffe and Candela (2002) in which they explored the opinions of employers about employing individuals with visual disabilities. They also found out that the more employers had working experience with individuals with visual disabilities, the more positive attitudes they developed.

In terms of physical conditions, it was obvious that neither private nor public organizations were physically appropriate for individuals with disabilities. In this respect, Law on Individuals with Disabilities was found to be ineffective in enforcement since organizations were not equipped adequately to meet the physical needs of individuals with visual disabilities. Naraine (2005) also stated that the institutions were far from meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities in terms of physical, psychological or social conditions even though recruiting them. Even so, participants stated they could get used to physical conditions after some time and as long as they had independent action, physical problems were resolvable for them. However, Newton et al. (2007) further explained that as physical environment has a significant role for the employment of individuals with visual disabilities, problems related to the physical environment should be taken into consideration.

As for learning experiences, it appeared that most of learning in the workplace was through informal learning activities as it was also suggested by Enos, Kehrhahn, & Bell (2003), Lohman (2000), Marsick and Watkins (1992), Eraut (2004), Altay (2007), and Çimen (2009). However, the fact that participants vary in their learning experiences points out to the importance of personal factors and the context as it was suggested by the model developed by Marsick & Watkins (2001). In this model, the context has a vital role because of being influential in how people perceive the events and give appropriate decisions and take actions.

Participants stated that they engaged in learning activities on their own when they needed to do so which was also consistent with the andragogy of Knowles (1975). In andragogy, Knowles (1975) explained that adult learners are self-directed in their learning and they identify the necessary sources and strategies on their own

in accordance with their needs and this was also supported by Marsick & Watkins (2001).

Eraut (2004) stated that most of learning in the workplace is informal and they generally arise out of learning from other people and learning from personal experience. Accordingly, participants distinguished between “learning on their own” and “learning from other people” which were also found to be two main categories of informal learning by Altay (2007) and Çimen (2009). After data analysis, exploration and on the job learning emerged as the mostly mentioned activity under the dimension of learning on their own whereas deduction from previous experiences was the least stated informal learning activity. On the other hand, informal learning from other people included activities such as asking others and mentoring from the sources of colleagues, managers and other individuals with visual disabilities.

Even though it was informal learning which mainly constituted the learning experiences of individuals with visual disabilities, formal learning practices were also emphasized throughout the interviews. During the interviews, it appeared that private organizations were keener on organizing formal training programs even though the efficiency of these programs was open to question. Accordingly, formal and informal learning activities were regarded as supporting each other by some of the participants as it was also stated by Cofer (2002). In terms of formal learning experiences, occupational training programs enforced by the government and preliminary training programs basically organized by the public organizations were mentioned. However, these were regarded by the participant as far from being useful due to the fact that their impairment was ignored during the preparation or presentation of these training programs.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the workplace experiences of individuals with visual disabilities with a focus on their learning experiences. Setting out from the data analysis, it can be concluded that finding a job was not an end for the problems of individuals with visual disabilities; however, it brought about another set of difficulties which were mentioned throughout the study.

Analysis of data revealed that participants had problems clustered around work-related, attitudinal and physical issues all of which were discussed in the previous section. However, when these experiences were examined in detail, it appeared that all these problems led to a decrease in performance on behalf of the participants. Therefore, the first and the most important implication of this study is that problems experienced by individuals with visual disabilities should be handled immediately for their full integration into the workplace so that they become fully functional members of the society.

Although most of the participants were given a formal training in their workplaces, analysis of data revealed that participants could not make use of them because of their inappropriateness for individuals with visual disabilities. Therefore, one of the implication of this study is that training programs, which aim at improving individuals with visual disabilities in terms of their performance in the workplace, should be designed taking their impairment into account. In this way, their needs will be met in a way that leads to their professional development and a better job satisfaction.

As formal learning activities were far from providing a support in terms of occupational needs, informal learning activities were heavily mentioned by the

participants in the study revealing that most of the learning in the workplace takes place through informal learning. Thus, in addition to carefully analyzing the contextual factors which enable or disable informal learning experiences of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace, it is vital to enhance the conditions of workplaces by providing required guidance and support as it was emphasized by Smith (2003).

All in all, despite the studies and laws trying to improve the conditions of individuals with visual disabilities, there are still several problems related to them. Therefore, it is important to make a comprehensive need analysis to be able to see the viewpoints of individuals with visual disabilities. In this way, it would be possible to make appropriate accommodations and provide their integration into the workplace; hence, to the society.

Limitations of the Study

Once the data was analyzed, some limitations were observed related to the current study. To begin with, as the researcher aimed at exploring the workplace experiences of individuals with visual disabilities along with their learning experiences, this study is limited to individuals with visual disabilities who were working in either public or private organizations at the time of the interviews.

Since the participants were determined on the basis of purposeful sampling, not the whole population but only a small percentage of individuals with visual disabilities were represented in the study. Even though the number of participants could also be thought as a limitation, qualitative research tries to understand the phenomenon in depth rather than generalizing it which was also the case with the current study. Thus, these findings cannot be generalized to other individuals with

visual disabilities in Turkey. Moreover, participants in this study were informed about their rights and most of them were active in their social lives. In this respect, they may not have represented the general population of individuals with visual disabilities in Turkey.

Secondly, most of the participants included in this study were engaged in jobs directly related to telephones which may have resulted in similar themes and codes. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the perspectives of individuals with visual disabilities working in different fields.

Thirdly, this study is limited to the degree of the information shared by the participants. Before the interviews were conducted, the participants were assured about the confidentiality of the information they provided. However, due to social desirability bias, participants may have answered the questions in a way that would depict them in a socially acceptable and desirable way which, in turn, may have resulted in answers which were thought to be appropriate rather than reflecting the reality.

Final limitation of the study may have caused from the fact that some participants may only have reflected their most negative perceptions. As the study was qualitative in nature, it lent itself to the construction of the perceptions on behalf of the participants. Therefore, it is vital to emphasize that the study was designed depending mainly on the perspectives of the participants and the results could only be discussed within this frame.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study explored the perspectives of individuals with visual disabilities related to their workplace experiences using a qualitative method. However, a quantitative

research would be useful in terms of providing data which would have generalizability.

Throughout the interviews, it was observed that each and every participant had their own life story which uniquely represented their struggle through life due to their impairment. Therefore, additional studies would be useful for a deeper understanding of each case along with the factors affecting their situation. Moreover, it was not possible to discuss the expectations of individuals with visual disabilities in Turkey within the scope of this study. However, these could be explored for better policies to improve the conditions of individuals with visual disabilities.

Another suggestion would be to explore the cultural factors which contribute to or hinder the informal learning of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace. In addition, personal factors would also be worth investigating in order to understand when and why people use certain strategies for informal learning in the workplace.

In this study, only the perspectives of individuals with visual disabilities were explored sometimes relying mainly on negative experiences. As it was beyond the scope of this study, it is vital to understand how colleagues and employers evaluate the employment of individuals with visual disabilities. Thus, research looking at the other side of the coin would be useful in terms of providing a basis for a better evaluation of workplace experiences.

Final recommendation for further research would be for a more comprehensive analysis of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace through increasing the sample group so that it would be possible to include a wider range of jobs. In this way, it would also be possible to observe the differences

stemming from the occupational areas and come up with a more comprehensible set of adjustments required for different workplaces.

All in all, this study was a basic step toward understanding the position of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace in Turkey. Therefore, considering the exploratory nature of this study, more comprehensive studies would be clearly a significant focus for prospective research.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Interview Form in English

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Gender :

Age :

Educational Level :

Marital Status :

When did you lost your vision? :

Degree of Vision Impairment / Reason? :

The sector in which you work :

Total years of work experience :

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you start your current job?
 - a. Have you preferred this job??
 - b. How long did it take before you start working? How long did you look for a job?
 - c. Have you ever changed you workplace? If yes, what was the reason for that?
 - d. How do you spend you time in the workplace?
 - e. Are you content with you workplace experiences?
2. What are your responsibilities in the workplace? Could you tell define your job description?
3. What knowledge and skills are required to carry out your job? Do you implement extra materials?
4. What are difficulties you encounter while carrying out your job?

5. Are there any problems stemming from the physical conditions in the workplace? If there are any, what are they?
6. Which adjustments made in the physical environment do you think would improve your performance?
7. How would you comment on the general attitude toward individuals with disabilities in your workplace? ?
 - a. How do you evaluate the attitude of your colleagues and managers toward you?
 - b. Do you have any colleagues you meet outside your workplace?
 - c. Whom do you have lunch with?
 - d. Do you participate in social activities organized by you workplace, if there are any?
 - e. Have you ever thought being discriminated in your workplace? Could you give examples?
8. Did you get any training before starting to work in order to learn required knowledge and skills to carry out your job? If yes, what were these trainings, and do you think these trainings contributed to your workplace experiences?
9. Have you demanded training in order to learn required knowledge and skills to carry out your job? If yes, what was the content of these trainings?
10. Are there any cases in which your educational needs were not met even though you demanded so as to learn required knowledge and skills to perform your job? Could you please explain?
11. Did you get any training while working in order to learn required knowledge and skills to carry out your job?

- a. If yes, what were these trainings and do you think these trainings contributed to your workplace experiences?
 - b. If no, how did you learn required knowledge and skills in order to carry out your job?
12. While performing your job, in cases when you think you do not have required knowledge and skills
- a. What strategy do you use?
 - b. From whom or what sources do you get help?
13. When you consider your knowledge and skills, are there other tasks which you think you could do better in your workplace?
14. What could be done so as to improve the working conditions of individuals with visual disabilities in the workplace? Is there anything you want to add?

APPENDIX B

The Interview Form in Turkish

KİŞİSEL BİLGİLER

- Cinsiyetiniz :
- Yaşınız :
- Eğitim Durumunuz :
- Medeni Durum :
- Görme yeteneğinizi ne zaman kaybettiniz? :
- Görme Bozukluğunun Derecesi? / Nedeni? :
- Çalıştığınız Sektör :
- Deneyim Süresi :

GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

1. Şu anki işinize nasıl başladınız?
 - a. Bu işi siz mi tercih ettiniz?
 - b. Çalışmaya başlamadan önce ne kadar zaman geçti? / Ne kadar zaman iş aradınız?
 - c. İş değişikliği yaptınız mı? Yaptıysanız bunun sebebi neydi?
 - d. Bir iş gününüzü nasıl geçiriyorsunuz?
 - e. İş yeri deneyimlerinizden memnun musunuz?
2. İş yerinizdeki görevleriniz nelerdir? İş tanımınızı yapar mısınız?
3. İşinizi yapmak için hangi bilgi ve beceriler gerekmektedir? Ek materyal kullanıyor musunuz?
4. İşinizi yaparken, en fazla sıkıntı çektiğiniz konular nelerdir?
5. İşyerinde fiziksel çevreden kaynaklanan problemleriniz var mı? Varsa nelerdir?

6. Fiziksel çevrede yapılan hangi düzenlemelerin performansınızı artıracakını düşünüyorsunuz?
7. İşyerinizde engellilere karşı genel tutumu nasıl yorumlarsınız?
 - a. İş arkadaşlarınızın ve iş vereninizin size karşı tutumunu nasıl görüyorsunuz?
 - b. İş dışında görüştüğünüz iş arkadaşınız var mı?
 - c. Öğle yemeklerine kiminle çıkıyorsunuz?
 - d. Varsa, iş yerinizin düzenlediği sosyal aktivitelere katılıyor musunuz?
 - e. İş yerinizde ayrımcılığa uğradığınızı düşündüğünüz durumlar oldu mu? Örnek verir misiniz?
8. İşinizin gerektirdiği bilgi ve becerileri öğrenmek için çalışmaya başlamadan önce herhangi bir eğitim aldınız mı? Aldıysanız bu eğitimler nelerdir ve bu eğitimlerin iş yeri deneyimlerinize katkı sağladığını düşünüyor musunuz?
9. İşinizin gerektirdiği bilgi ve becerileri öğrenmek için herhangi bir eğitim talebiniz oldu mu? Olduysa bunların içeriği nedir?
10. İşinizin gerektirdiği bilgi ve becerileri öğrenmek için talep ettiğiniz halde eğitim ihtiyacınızın karşılanmadığı durumlar oldu mu? Açıklar mısınız?
11. İşinizin gerektirdiği bilgi ve becerileri öğrenmek için çalışırken herhangi bir eğitim aldınız mı?
 - a. Aldıysanız; bu eğitimler nelerdir ve bu eğitimlerin iş yeri deneyimlerinize katkı sağladığını düşünüyor musunuz?
 - b. Almadıysanız; işinizi devam ettirmek için gerekli bilgi ve becerileri nereden öğrendiniz?
12. İşinizi yürütürken, gereken bilgi ve becerilere sahip olmadığınızı düşündüğünüz durumlarda

a. Nasıl bir yöntem kullanırsınız?

b. Kimlerden ya da hangi kaynaklardan yardım alırsınız?

13. Bilgi ve becerilerinizi düşündüğünüzde, iş yerinizde daha iyi

yapabileceğinizi düşündüğünüz işler var mı? Varsa, bunlar nelerdir?

14. Görme engellilerin iş yeri deneyimlerini iyileştirmek adına neler yapılabilir?

Ekleme istedikleriniz var mı?

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form in English

Informed Consent Form

This study is being conducted within the scope of my graduate thesis study in Faculty of Education, Adult Education programme in Bosporus University. The purpose of this study is to make a research examining the workplace experiences and learning ways of individuals with visual disabilities and by this way, to get data about individuals with visual disabilities who are working. The reason why I want you to join in my study is my belief that as a working person with visual disabilities, your views will contribute to my better understanding of the experiences of individuals with visual disabilities. Furthermore, your experiences and views can be helpful in terms of providing a basis for further research.

In this interview, your personal information will be kept completely confidential. While processing the information provided by you, nicknames will be used instead of your real names; information revealing your identity will be excluded or changed. On condition that you have given permission, our interview will be recorded by a voice recorder. This situation will help me save time by giving the chance for a more detailed interview with you. Voice recordings of our interview will be listened only by me and kept in an inaccessible place for anybody except me. After the related studies such as thesis, article, comparison etc... are completed, all the voice recordings will be deleted.

Within the scope of my research, this interview will last approximately sixty minutes. However, except this interview, as a consequence of other interviews and research, as extra information and views may be needed, there may also be a possibility of doing another interview with you. I want to emphasize that there are no correct or wrong answers for the questions I will ask you. My only expectation is to get your expectations, views and feelings about this topic. That's why, from time to time, I may want you to exemplify something you have mentioned, and the only reason for this is to ensure that I understand properly.

I also want to emphasize that your participation in this study depends only on your willingness. You can end the interview whenever you want and you can skip a question you do not want to answer. If you want to share anything in terms of ethics or others about this study with somebody else, you can communicate with Assist. Prof. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı, Bosporus University Education Faculty academician, by using the communication information below:

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı:

Mobile:

e-mail:

For any questions on the interview you can also communicate with me by using the information below:

Esin Yiğit

Mobile:

e-mail:

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form in Turkish

Bilgilendirilmiş Onay Formu

Bu çalışma Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Yetişkin Eğitimi programında yürüttüğüm yüksek lisans tez çalışması kapsamında yapılmaktadır. Amacı, görme engellilerin iş yeri deneyimlerini ve öğrenme yöntemlerini inceleyen bir araştırma yapmak ve bu suretle çalışmakta olan görme engellilere ilişkin veri elde etmektir. Sizin de bu çalışmaya katılmanızı istememin nedeni, çalışan bir görme engelli olarak görüşlerinizin görme engellilerin iş yeri deneyimlerini daha iyi anlamama yardımcı olacağına dair inancımdır. Ayrıca deneyimleriniz ve görüşleriniz ileride yapılacak olan bazı çalışmalara temel oluşturması açısından faydalı olabilir.

Sizinle yapmış olduğum bu görüşmede kişisel bilgileriniz tamamen gizli kalacaktır. Bana verdiğiniz bilgileri kullanırken, isminiz yerine takma ad kullanılacak, kimliğinizi ortaya çıkaracak bilgilere yer verilmeyecek veya bunlar değiştirilecektir. İzin verdiğiniz takdirde görüşmemiz ses kayıt cihazıyla kaydedilecektir. Bu durum bana sizinle daha ayrıntılı görüşme yapmama olanak sağlayacak bir zaman kazandıracaktır. Görüşmemizin ses kayıtları yalnızca benim tarafımdan dinlenilecek, benim dışımda kimsenin ulaşamayacağı bir yerde saklanacaktır. Bu konuyla ilgili tez, makale, karşılaştırma vs. çalışmalarının tamamlanması ardından tüm ses kayıtları silinecektir.

Yaptığım araştırma kapsamında, sizinle olan bu görüşmemiz yaklaşık altmış dakika sürecektir. Ancak bu görüşme dışında, yapacağım diğer görüşmeler ve araştırmalar neticesinde ek bilgilere ve görüşlerinize ihtiyaç doğabileceğinden, bir kez daha sizinle görüşme olasılığımız olabilir. Önemle hatırlatmak isterim ki, size soracağım soruların doğru ya da yanlış yanıtları yoktur. Buradaki tek beklentim sizin konuyla ilgili deneyim, görüş ve duygularınızı anlayabilmektir. Bu nedenle zaman zaman söylediğiniz bir şeyi örneklendirmenizi isteyebilirim, bunun tek amacı sözlerinizi doğru anladığımdan emin olmaktır.

Yine altını çizmek isterim ki, bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamıyla gönüllüğe bağlıdır. Dilediğiniz an görüşmeyi sona erdirebilir veya dilediğiniz soruyu yanıtlamayabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmayla ilgili benden başka birinden bilgi almak isterseniz, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi öğretim üyesi ve tez danışmanım Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı ile aşağıdaki iletişim bilgilerini kullanarak görüşebilirsiniz.

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklı:

Cep Tel:

e-posta:

Görüşmeyle ilgili her türlü sorularınız için benimle de aşağıdaki bilgileri kullanarak iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Esin Yiğit

Cep tel:

e-posta:

APPENDIX E

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

#	Name	Gender	Age	Educational Level	Undergraduate	Master
1	Aslı	Female	31	University	History Teaching	Educational Administration
2	Beyza	Female	28	University	Pre-School Education Teaching	-
3	Burak	Male	33	High School	Open university*	-
4	Gözde	Female	30	University	Psychological Counseling and Guidance	Human Rights Law
5	İbrahim	Male	22	High School	-	-
6	İpek	Female	29	University	English Language Teaching	-
7	Kemal	Male	32	High School	-	-
8	Melike	Female	20	High School	-	-
9	Metin	Male	27	University	Communication and Public Relations	Sociology*
10	Ozan	Male	33	High School	-	-
11	Ömer	Male	36	University	Political Sciences and International Relations	-
12	Tarık	Male	25	High School	-	-

* continuing

#	Name	Type of Org.	Total Years of Experience	Work title	When they lost their vision	Degree of their vision impairment
1	Aslı	Private	7	Crew Planning Operator	At birth	Totally blind
2	Beyza	Public	4	Teacher	At birth	20-30 % vision
3	Burak	Private	10.5	Switchboard operator	9 years old	Totally blind - Light perception
4	Gözde	Private	5	Customer relations expert	1.5 years old	Totally blind
5	İbrahim	Private	1	Call center operator	15 years old	15 % vision
6	İpek	Public	6	Teacher	16 years old -Progressive vision loss	2 % - light perception
7	Kemal	Public	10.5	Switchboard operator	13 years old	Totally blind (light perception)
8	Melike	Public	7 months	Switchboard operator	11 years old	Totally blind
9	Metin	Public	8 months	Officer	2.5 years old	Totally blind
10	Ozan	Public	12	Switchboard operator	At birth	Light perception
11	Ömer	Private	13	Product manager	At birth	Totally blind
12	Tarık	Private	1.5	Call center operator	At birth	Totally blind

APPENDIX F

Themes, Dimensions and Codes for

Experiences of Individuals with Visual Disabilities and Their Learning

Themes	Dimensions	Codes
Having a Job	Recruitment Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exams 2. Projects 3. Intentional choice 4. Via references / personal contacts 5. No other choice
	Required Skills and Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Computer 7. Switchboard (call master) 8. Memory 9. Work related knowledge 10. Communication skills 11. Persuasive ability 12. Daily living skills 13. White cane 14. Diploma
	Experiences in the Workplace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Discrimination 16. Not being given equal opportunities 17. Being given some privileges 18. Job itself 19. Effects of vision impairment 20. Not being assigned a task or responsibility 21. Ignoring their demands 22. Finding their own formulas to the problems 23. Not being regarded as an employee 24. Limiting their capabilities to certain tasks 25. Underestimation of their capacities 26. The constant need to prove their capabilities 27. Attitudes of colleagues / managers 28. Unawareness of people 29. Mobbing 30. Problems related to physical conditions 31. Lack of materials 32. Insufficiency of training programs
Learning Experiences in the Workplace	Types of Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 33. Occupational training program 34. In-service training programs 35. Orientation programs 36. Online training programs 37. Exploration 38. The use of the Internet 39. Trial and error 40. On the job learning 41. Deduction from previous experiences 42. Asking others 43. Listening 44. Mentoring
	Learning Sources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 45. Colleagues 46. Managers 47. The Internet 48. Others with visual disabilities

APPENDIX G

Participants' Quotes in Turkish

1. Gittiğim özel kurumlarda çok fazla kabul göremedim çünkü anasınıfı öğretmenliği daha fazla görsellik içeriyor ve özel kurumlar daha fazla ticari baktıkları için senden çok fazla performansının yüksek olmasını bekliyorlar. O performansı görmeyen birisi olarak gösteremeyeceğine inanılıyor ve genelde reddediliyorsun. Mezun olduğum okul dahil bunun gibi bir kaç kurum – ama 10-20 kuruma gittim diyemem açıkçası – zaten başvurum 3-5 kurumdu ama genelde olumsuzdu, tepkiler olumsuzdu çünkü zaten “Olmaz, görmeyen birisi nasıl olur?” bakış açısı vardı (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
2. Görüşmeler güzel geçiyor, bayağı bir takdir topluyorum ama sonuçta bir şey yok [...] Emin ol ki, kendim kadar takdir edilen ama bir o kadar da iş bulamayan, görüşmelere gidip başarısız olan başka biri var mıdır, emin değilim. O kadar çok sayısız görüşmeye gittim ki, ve hiçbiri olumsuz geçmiyor aslına bakarsan bana göre ama çoğu göz boyama (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
3. 1999 yılında açıklanıp 2000’de alımı yapılan DMS sınavı atamalarıyla kazandım, atandım. Açılan sınavda engelli kadrosu diye bir şey yoktu. Her birey gibi müracaat ettim, engelli olduğumu raporunda bildirip, okutman istedim. Tercih olarak zaten sıkıntılıydı, 10.000 atama yapıldı, bu 10000 atama içinde benim yazıp da atanabileceğim kontenjan 4’tü (Kemal, santral memuru).
4. Aslında ben özel sektörde çalışmak istiyordum, çok baskılı bir şekilde değil ama ara ara iş arama dönemim oldu. İstedğim kariyerde bir şey bulamadım. Biraz herhalde yaş ilerledikçe daha fazla şey istiyor oluyorsun. Daha sonra memurluk sınavına girdim ve kazandım. Gelire ihtiyacım oldu, girdim (Metin, memur).
5. Aslında devlete geçmek tam olarak benim hedefim değildi, aklımda da yoktu ama bu engelliler için bir sınav açıldı [...] Somut bir hedef değildi benim için devlette çalışmak ama özelde de bir şekilde paramı maddi olarak alıyor olmak da çok fazla tatmin etmemeye başlıyor bir süre sonra çünkü eski o maneviyatı bir süre sonra bulamamaya başladım, her şey çok ticari [...] Özel kurumların da çok fazla benim çalışabileceğim alanlar olmadığını anladım, o yüzden bu sınav da bir fırsattı, girdim ve o şekilde atandım (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
6. Ben gerçekten araştırma yapmak, bu gibi akademik çalışmalar yapmayı daha çok seviyorum ve şu anda hala özlüyorum. Öğretmenlik yapmaya devam edebilirim ama sadece öğretmen olarak kalmak istemem. Devlet kurumunda, üniversite ortamında başka şeyler yapmayı tercih ederim, sadece okulda kalmak tek hedefim değil. Devlete geçmemin en temel amacı bu, daha rahat yüksek lisans yapabilirim çünkü özel kurumda kalsaydım bunu yapmam imkansızdı. O yüzden büyük ihtimalle işimden olabilirdim (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
7. Engelli personel alıyorlardı, alırken başvurudum ama referansla gittim – tanıdık referansıyla (Ozan, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
8. Projeyle başladık biz, Türkiye’de belli bir personel sayısına sahip olan şirketlerin %3 oranında engelli çalıştırma zorunlulukları var. X şirketi bu kontenjanını doldurmak için işte bir 100 engelli aldı. Onlarda iki şart vardı: bir İşkur’a kayıtlı olmanız gerekiyordu bir de 2004 KPSS sınavına girmek gerekiyordu. Her ikisi de vardı ben de, başvurumu yaptım. Görüşmeye çağırıldım. 8-10 kişilik bir grup

tarafından görüşme yapıldı. Daha sonra bu görüşme sonucunda olumlu sonuç çıkmış, alındım (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).

9. Mezuniyete yakın - sonlara doğru - iş görüşmeleri yaparken birisi de Y şirketi idi. En olumlu geçen iş görüşmesiydi ve en olumlu teklif onunki idi, o yüzden orada başladım. Bilgisayara dair de özel bir ilgim olmaya başlamıştı (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
10. Çağrı merkezinde çalışmak benim tercihim değildi, sadece o dönemde o vardı önümde, o proje vardı ve o vardı. Burada başlayayım da oradan mutlaka başka bir birime geçerim diye düşündüm. Benim çalışmak istediğim asıl sektör eğitim alanında, çaktırmadan bir şekilde oraya kaymaya çalışacağım bu süreçte. Danışmanlık tarzı olabilir [...] Bu alanda çalışmak istiyorum işin doğrusu (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
11. Tabii ki, bilgisayarı kullanmak gerekiyor öncelikle; yani bilgisayara hakim olmak lazım (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
12. Bu işi yaparken, körlerle ilgili yardımcı teknolojileri iyi kullanmak ve onları takip etmek gerekiyor. O bir kere şart. Jaws, konuşma sentezleyici olabilir, teknolojik yazılımlar var, onların dışında office bilgisi gerekiyor. İyi bir bilgisayar kullanıcısı olmanın yanında iyi bir yardımcı teknolojileri – assistive technology – takip etmek, kullanmıyor olsan bile o konudaki gelişmeleri yakından takip etmek gerekiyor (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
13. Bilgisayar kullanmak pek çok görmeyen için olmazsa olmaz diyebilirim. Her görmeyen kişi bilgisayarı kullanmak zorunda aksi halde çok fazla problemle karşılaşır ki, şu anda bile karşılaşıyoruz. Herkes çalışmak zorunda değil ama evde oturan birinin bile msn'den chat yapması muhteşem bir şey bence çünkü ortak sosyal bir paylaşım yapıyorsunuz. Pek çok görmeyenin de facebookunun bilmem nesinin olduğunu biliyorum. Bir şekilde bizim hayatımızın bir yerinde bilgisayar olmak zorunda çünkü hakikaten çok hayatı değiştiren... İlk powerpoint sunumumu yaptığımda, sana hissettiğim keyfi anlatamam. Hiç kimsenin desteği olmadan; aksi halde birisiyle yazıyorduk, duvara filan yansıtıyorduk ama tamamen bir şeyin kontrolünün senin elinde olması çok güzel bir şey. Bilgisayar da bir çok ölçüde sağlıyor (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
14. Kullandığımız ekran okuyucu program çok önemli; çağın devrimi diyebilirim. Aksi halde hayal gibi bir şey (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
15. Santral memurluğunu yapabilmek için gerekli tek şey, sıfır görüyorsa tamamen körse, iyi bir hafıza ya da o hafızayı karşılayabilecek teknolojik cihazlar [...] Bilgisayar aslında normalde kullanmasını biliyorum, kabartma yazı biliyorum, bunların hepsine sahibim ama işimde bunları hiçbirisini kullanmıyorum. Tamamen hafıza (Kemal, santral memuru).
16. Telefon dışında kullandığım materyal yok. Bilgisayar da kullanıyorum ama onu sadece telefon numaralarını kaydetmek için rehber var, onun için kullanıyorum (Melike, santral memuru).

17. Pek bir bilgi beceri gerekmiyor. Gelen dahiliye bir kere anlıyorsunuz, ne istediğini, kimle konuşmak istediğini, konunun ne olduğunu, o kişiyi kısa bir süre için beklemeye aşır dahiliye tuşlayıp tekrar transfer tuşuna basarak aktarıyorsunuz, kapatıyorsunuz. Bundan ibaret, çok önemli bir eğitim gerekmiyor [...] Bankanın en vasat ve geri plandaki, işlere hiçbir katkısı olmayan ve çok az katkısı olabilecek bir iş (Burak, santral memuru).
18. [...] sonrasında benim yaptığım iş insanlarla iletişim, telefonla iş yapıyorum. Telefonla konuşma becerisinin iyi olması gerekiyor, iyi dinlemek lazım, söylenileni iyi anlamak lazım ve ikna edici cevaplar vermek gerekiyor. Bunun için de tabii ki işinizi iyi bilmeniz lazım (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
19. Çok iyi bir iletişimci olman lazım; iletişim gücünün hakikaten çok değerli olduğunu düşünüyorum. Çok sabırlı olman lazım, sinirlerini aldırılmış olman lazım ve pek çok müşteri ilişkileri yöneticisi bunu yapamıyor, yapmıyor ya da umrunda değil. Gerçekten insanları anlıyor olmak lazım (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
20. Kişinin sana güven duymasını sağlayacak bir ikna kabiliyeti, ses tonu olması gerekiyor. Kişi bir çırpıda, senin o işi halledip halledemeyeceğini hissediyor, en azından halledemesen bile o konudaki çabanı ve iyi niyetini bir şekilde görüyor (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
21. İşle ilgili bütün konulara vakıf olmalı, iyi bir diksiyonu olmalı, kaşındaki kişiyi ikna edici. Ben santraldeki kişinin kendimce psikoloji danışma merkezi olduğunu düşünüyorum çünkü orayı arayan kişi, sizin vereceğiniz cevapla, sertse onu yumuşatıp görüşmesi gereken kişiye ulaştırabilirsiniz ya da ordaki yapacağınız bir itibarla o kişinin kanaatini değiştirebilirsiniz – davranışınızla (Ozan, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
22. Ayrıca baston kullanıyorum, az gören biriyim ama her zaman baston kullanıyorum; görmemin yetmeyeceği durumlarda baston her zaman elimde oluyor. Onu verimli olarak kullanmıyor olsam da, göremediğim yerlerde o anlamda baston bana yardımcı oluyor (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
23. Bastonu rehabilitasyonda öğrendim [...] Hep bastonla geziyorum ona rağmen beni eziyorlar (İpek, English language teacher).
24. Masa lambam var ve ayrıca küçük lambalarım var. Masa lambamda böyle daha temel şeylerde kullanıyorum, daha fazla aydınlık ortama ihtiyaç duyduğumda, kitap çalışmasında falan (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
25. İlkokulu görme engelliler okulunda okudum, braille öğretiyorlardı. Braille öğrenme meselesinden ziyade braille olarak kaynakların bulunmayışı ilk sorun zaten (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
26. Üniversitede okurken engelli çocuklarla çalışmaya başlayınca öğretmek için öğrendim (Braille), aynı zamanda ilerde kendi ihtiyacım da olur diye. Sonuçta az görmek bir risktir, her zaman kaybolabilir. Yani hem kendim için, hem öğretmek için (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).

27. [...] Sonrasında herkes işe başladı, eğitim süreci geçti, herkesin kullanıcı adı, şifreleri geliyor tabii ki biz 12 kişiye - hiç görmeyen olarak - herhangi gelen bir şey yok. Az görenler de vardı, onlar da herhangi bir sıkıntı yaşanmadı, ekranı takip edebiliyorlardı (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
28. Aynı gün iki kişi başladık işe, o da çağrı merkezinden gelmişti ben de; o lise mezunuydu ben üniversite mezunuydum; ben çağrı merkezinde 2 yıl çalışmıştım o 9 ay çalışmıştı ama o gören biri, herhangi bir engeli olmayan birisi. Hemen öğleden sonra ona iş verildi, şu şu işleri yapacaksın denildi, ben oturuyorum tabii, ben tam 9 hafta sonra başladım işe. Bilgisayarım kurulduktan sonra da ne şefim ne müdürüm baktı mesela, nasıl gidiyor yapabilecek misin diye (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
29. Mesela bir toplantı olduğunda ben katılmıyorum. Katılma demiyorlar zaten teklif de etmiyorlar, toplantı yapıcaz gibi bir şey de demiyorlar. Benim de haberim olmayınca gitmiyorum (Melike, santral memuru).
30. Verilen bir eğitim var, yeni başlayan kabin ekibine, ekip planlama dersi veriliyor, mesai hesaplamaları, program okuma vs. Ben de işi yeni öğrenmeye başlıyorum ya bir çok eksikim var, o eğitim programına ben de katılmayım dedim, aslında personel hiç katılmıyor [...] Şefimiz kabul etmedi, ve sonradan bu kabul edildi ve herkes o eğitime götürüldü ben hariç. Öneriyi veren bendim [...] Benimle birlikte başlayan hatta benden biraz önce başlayanlar, o eğitime götürüldü. Ben sorduğum zaman da şefim “Sen artık öğrendin” dedi. Mesele o değil ki burda (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
31. Bir kere mail geldi, altı yıl önceydi galiba. Müşterilerle nasıl konuşulacağına dair bir eğitim verilecekti. O günlerde müdürüm istemedi gitmemi, benimle ilgili de bir yazı gelmişti. Haftaiçine denk geliyordu “İşimiz var, gitme, telefonlara birinin bakması lazım” dedi, eğitimleri o o zaman engelledi (Burak, santral memuru).
32. Yemek saatinden 1-2 dakika önce yemekhaneye giriyorum, kimse yokken giriyorum, yanımda bir refakatçiyle giriyorum [...] Ayrımcılık her yerde var. Bunun en basit örneği budur çünkü bana özel bir şey düzenleniyor, yapılıyor, imtiyaz sağlanıyor (Kemal, santral memuru).
33. Asansör sırası diye bir olay var; biz ona dahil değiliz. Normalde insanlar çıkışta veya öğle yemeklerinde asansöre sırayla biniyorlar çok kalabalık olduğu için; önüne gelen her zaman atlayıp da asansöre binemiyor. Ama bize öyle bir şey yok, binebiliyoruz çünkü geç kalma durumumuz olabiliyor. Mesela bazı yerlerde aşırı hızlı yürünemiyor, insan olduğu için. O yüzden biz biraz erken çıkıp, erken binip bunlardan kurtulabiliyoruz, yanımızda birisi yoksa. O konuda da bize opsiyon tanıdılar, çalışanların bir opsiyonu bu, yönetimin dediği değil [...] Bizim servislerimiz sabit duruyor, değişmiyor. Normalde servislerin yeri sabit değil. Bulabilmemiz için. Normalde zaten arkadaşlar da yardımcı oluyorlar ama olur da kimse olmadığı zaman veya sonuçta birine bağımlı olmak benim tarzım değil, o yüzden bunu biz talep ettik. En azından belli noktalarda olmasını biz talep ettik, kabul edildi (Tarık, çağrı merkezi).

34. Nöbet konusunda ben bilmiyordum tutmayacağımı, hep imza attırıyorlar ama bakıyorum listede adım yoktu. Orası çok riskli bir şey, bir şey oldu mu senin başına patlıyor (İpek, English language teacher).
35. Büyük defterler var. O defterlerin her akşam toplanıp sabahları tekrar bize gelmesi gerekiyor, o defterlerin taşındığı kocaman bir valiz var. Eskiden bir odacı vardı o götürür getirirdi, şimdi o yok, personel yapacak bu işi, nöbete konuldu bu iş. Ben yoktum o gün ofiste, o nöbetten beni muaf tutmuşlar. Mesela bunu da onlara sorarsanız bir pozitif ayrımcılık, ama bence son derece gereksiz bir şey çünkü benim görme engelli olmam o çantayı taşımama engel değil. Fiziksel güç isteyen bir şey çünkü o. Ben belimden bir rahatsızlığım olsa, yürüme problemim olsa beni zorlayabilirdi. Pozitif gibi görünen bunlar bile bence negatif ayrımcılık (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
36. Genel müdürlükten taşınırken bir oturma çizelgesi geldi; ünite de benim haricimde bir tane koltuk değnekli bir arkadaşım daha var, bir tane kör bir arkadaşım var, bizim üçümüzü oturma düzeninde aynı yere koymuşlar. Benim için satır arası şeyler çok önemlidir [...] o tür şeyler o kadar değerli mesajlar verir ki aslında. Bu çizelgeyi kim hazırladı bilmiyorum ama bunu onaylayan da belli ki birisi var. Şu durum bana o kadar şey açısından ipucu verebilir ki! Onu pek çok açıdan açıklayabilirler, “Arkadaşlarımız için kolaylık olsun” bilmem ne, hayır, kolaylık olması açısından falan değerlendirilecek bir durum değil. Bu spesifik bir ayrımcılık ama bunu anlatsam başka birine, anlamaz, “Ne alaka, bu sizin için kolaylık” falan der (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
37. Kime göre pozitif? Onlara göre düşününce tabii ki olumlu bir şey – beni korumacı bir tavırları var, iyi niyetliler filan ama bana göre hiç de olumlu bir şey değil. Aksine küçük düşürücü. Ben ayağa kalkınca, bir şey yapmak isteyince bile “Dur düşersin” o tür şeyler oluyor, kötü yani (Melike, santral memuru).
38. Ayrımcılık pozitif de olsa, bir görmeyen için negatiftir, pozitif diye bir şey olamaz çünkü sen ayrılmışsın demektir, ayrılmaya ihtiyaç duyulmuşsun demektir, o yüzden ben buna fırsat vermiyorum (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
39. Normalde çocuklarla olmak çok zevkli, çok güzel, çok anlamlı ama aynı zamanda çok yorucu, çok stresli; fazlaca sabırlı olmak zorundasınız ve küçük çocuklar olduğu için gözünüz her yerde olmalı. Ama bir az gören olarak bazen gözünüz her yerde olamıyor, olsa da faydası olamayabiliyor çünkü çocuklar çok fazla hareketli, çok fazla enerjik ve bunlar küçük çocuklar, öyle olmak zorundalar [...] Ana sınıfı öğretmenliğinin çok güzel yanları var, ama tek bir dezavantajı var: bazı durumlarda bir görene mecbur bırakılıyorsunuz, çünkü orda “Bunu ben yaparım” deme lüksüm yok orda çocuğun başına bir şey gelebilir. “Kimse gelmesin, bana yardımcı olmasın, ben gönderirim tuvalete” falan değil hani orda birinin desteğine zaman zaman ihtiyaç duyuyorsun (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
40. Bazı konularda öğretmen olarak gerçekten dezavantajlısın: Ne bileyim, çocuğun yazısını kontrol edemiyorsun, bu bence büyük bir dezavantaj çünkü 4-5'lere giriyorum ve yanlış yazabiliyorlar [...] Sınavlarda abimin eşi kontrol ediyor. Sınavların sadece notlarından haberim oluyor; aslında o da bir dezavantaj çünkü

çocuğun tam olarak nerde hatası olduğunu bilemiyorsun (İpek, English language teacher).

41. İnsan robot değildir, aynı işi yapmak belli bir süre sonra sıkıntı veriyor, sıkılıyorsunuz. Bir de bizim işimiz devamlı oturularak yapılan bir iş; engellilerin çoğunda zaten bu problem vardır, özellikle görme engellilerde. Hareket alanı darlaşıyor, kilo alımı, boyun fıtığı, sırt ağrıları gibi; o yüzden yapılan işten memnun değilim. İşimi seviyorum, işimi yaparım, en iyisini yaparım ama süreçten memnun değilim. 10-11 yıldır aynı işi yapıyorum ve hep aynı işi yapmak yıllarca sıkıntı veriyor (Kemal, santral memuru).
42. Bir şeyde zorlanmadım şimdiye kadar ama başta şirketin kendi problemleri vardı, başta onlarda zorlandım çünkü sistem tamamen İngilizceydi. Fazla da İngilizce bilmiyordum, sonra zaten programlar Türkçe'ye döndü, şimdi daha rahat (İbrahim, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
43. Hep benim rahatsız olduğum, şikayetçi olduğum şey oydu: geliyor yanımdaki arkadaşşıma diyor ki "Cem, şunu yap, şunları sisteme gir, şu kişileri ara! Ahmet şunları şunları yap!" Ben sanki orda yokmuşum gibi davranıyor. Part-time öğrenciler geliyor mesela, onlara bile iş veriyor, bana hiç iş vermiyor, en çok rahatsız eden şey oydu beni (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
44. Geçtiğimiz eylülde terfi aldım, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı oldum. Ama yeni bir sorumluluk veriyorlar mı sana dersin, hayır, işim aynı sadece ünvanım değişti. Aynı işi yapmaktayım, şirket için pek çok iş yapabileceğim halde, dosyalar haricinde başka işler de var çünkü ama kesinlikle yeni bir sorumluluk verilmiyor (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
45. Bana verilen bir görev tanımı yok, benim kopardıklarım var sadece. Diğer memur ben gittiğimde zaten vardı, o zaten hazır her şeyi yapıyor. Bana baştan her şeyi öğretmeleri gerekiyor, herkese öğretmeleri gerekiyor zaten. Onla pek uğraşmıyorlar, memur kendi işini kaybedeceği için zaten hiçbir şey öğretmek istemiyor. Müdür yardımcılarının da çok fazla otoritesi olmadığı için işler yürümüyor (Metin, memur).
46. Bana uzun süre şefim iş vermedi; hep kendi işimi kendim oluşturdum. Etrafı gözlemliyorum, hangi işi ben yapabilirim deyip o işleri yapmaya başladım (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
47. Şu an benim şefim herkes tarafından çok sevilen bir insan; gülyüzlü, iyiniyetli, yumuşak bir mizacı var. Yerimden kalkıp yürümeye başladığım zaman önümde masa, sandalye varsa onlara dikkat eden, başkalarını da o yönde teşvik eden, ben açık olan dolabın kapağına çarptığım zaman hakikaten çok üzülen, böyle hassasiyetleri olan bir insan ama öte yandan benim işle ilgili taleplerimi de son derece görmezden gelen bir insan. Ama aslında benim ihtiyacım olan o değil ki, ben bir süre sonra ofisin ortamına alışırım, ya da sandalyeye çarpmak ya da dolabın kapağına yüzümü vurmam benim ruhumu o kadar acıtmıyor, o an acır geçer ama dışlanmış olmak, eşit davranılmamış olmak telafi edilmeyen acılara sebebiyet veriyor gerçekten [...] Bir süre sonra kendine güvenini de kaybediyorsun (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).

48. Aynı konuyu amirlerime de iletiyorum, yanıt alamıyorum, sessiz kalıyorlar. Memnuniyetsizliğim sebebi, bir kişi olarak dikkate alınmıyor olmam. Bir birey olarak, görme engelimi bir cezalandırma gerekçesi olarak bana yaklaştıklarını düşünüyorum. Taleplerimi, isteklerimi sanki bir suçmuş gibi, bir kabahatmiş gibi algılıyorlar ve bana olumsuz yanıt bile verme gereği duymuyorlar (Burak, santral memuru).
49. Defterden okumak gerekiyor devamsızlıkları girmek için, diğer sözleşmeli memur tabi ki okumayı reddetti, “Ben kendim girerim o zaman” falan yaptı. Ben de nöbetçi öğrenciyle çözüyorum şu anda işi. Kendim formüller geliştiriyorum (Metin, memur).
50. Zaman geçtikçe formülünüzü üretiyorsunuz zaten; mesela küçük el lambalarım var benim, sadece tuttuğun yeri aydınlatıyor, fener gibi düşünelim. Bir yazının üstünü aydınlatıyorum, bir resme bakmak istiyorsam resmin üzerine tutuyorum, şöyle avuç içim kadar bir şey ve bu şekilde dolaştırıp o şekilde çocuklara anlatabiliyorum. Veya çocuklar bir şey sorduğunda onun kitabına tutuyorum, hatta “Bakın Alaaddin’in sihirli lambası” diyorum (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
51. Ya her şeyi kendin yapacaksın ya bu işi bırakacaksın. Kendi çözümünü kendin bulmak zorundasın; her şey için çok fazla çaba harcamak zorundasın. Bu benim okul hayatım boyunca da böyle oldu, üniversite hayatım boyunca da böyle oldu, iş hayatımda da böyle oldu, şimdi de böyle. Sanırım uzun yıllar da böyle olacak. Eğer başarılı olmak istiyorsan, farklı olmak istiyorsan o zaman çok fazla çaba göstermek zorundasın (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
52. [...] benim yapılmasında fikir ve emeğimi sarf ettiğim, ortaya çıkmasında fikrim olan [...] Ordaki katkılarımın bazen görülmediğini düşünüyorum. Bunun körlükten kaynaklı bir yönü de var, öte yandan yönetsel bir zaaf da aynı zamanda. Tek başına körlükle alakalı değil ama onun da bir etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum. Örneğin bir Ar-ge ürününün geliştirilmesinde ben fikri ortaya attığım halde – ayrıntılandırdığım, outline vs çıkardığım halde – o tür katkılarımın görülmediğini, bunun da beni bu tür konularda çok proaktif davranmamaya ittiğini – istemsiz de olsa – dolaylı ya da doğrudan – onu hissediyorum. Senin kişi olarak görülmemen bir de yaptıklarının da çok şey olmaması (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
53. Dünya Engelliler Günü’nde falan mesaj atıyorlar ama onun haricinde pek çok kişinin çok çalışan olarak algılanmadığını düşünüyorum, çalıştıkları halde. Özel olarak değil ama satır aralarında bence yansıtıyorlar. Mesela kaç tane yönetici geldi bizim bölüme de “Sen ne iş yapıyorsun, nasıl yapıyorsun?” 5 yıldır ben oradayım, işi nasıl yaptığımı, nasıl bir destek aldığımı, nasıl bilgisayarları kullandığımı 1 kişi mi merak etmez, hiç kimse merak etmiyor. Beklediğim özel bir ilgi değil, sadece önemsemediğini gösteriyor (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
54. Oranın müdürü takip ettiğinin farkındayım ama kesinlikle ilgilenmiyor, beni yok sayıyor. Mesela seninle oturuyoruz, geliyor sana “Nasılsın?” diye soruyor. Sonra sana “Gözde nasıl?” diye soruyor. Yani görmezlikten geliyor seni bir şekilde,

kasıtlı olduğunu düşünüyorum çünkü direk yüzüne baktığım halde bile direk seni saymıyor, görmüyor (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).

55. Görme engellilerde, özellikle belli başlı 4-5 meslek vardır, kör oldun mu “Hafız” çağırırlar, ya hocadır, ezberlemiştir Kuran’ı, ya saz çalışıyordu aşık, ozandır, ya hukuk bitirmiştir avukattır, ya da santral memurudur. Standart bazı şeyler vardır, bu da görme engellilerin beyinlerinin hafızalarının fazla kullanılmasıyla ilgili, hafızalarının kullanıldığı bilindiği için hafıza gerektiren bazı mesleklerdir (Kemal, santral memuru).
56. Ben “Keşke şunu okusaydım bunu okusaydım” falan tarzında konuşuyordum, bu da “Bana bak kızım, Oxford da bitirsen santral memurluğundan başka bir şey yapamazsın; ya öğretmenlik ya santral memurluğu, başka bir şey yapamazsın bu ülkede. Boşu boşuna hayal kurma” demişti (İpek, English language teacher).
57. Körler için en yaygın mesleklerden bir tanesi santralcilik; santral eşittir körlük, körlük eşittir santral gibi bir şey diyebilirim sana sektör olarak. Çağrı merkezi santrale göre biraz daha zengin bir iş, apayrı bir iş aslına bakarsan çünkü başka beceriler de gerekiyor: telefonda konuşuyorsun aynı zamanda rezervasyon yapıyorsun, yolcunun sorduğu başka soruları cevaplıyorsun, bilet satıyorsun, üye yapmaya çalışıyorsun, yolcuları ikna etmeye çalışıyorsun ve bunları belli bir hızla yapmak zorundasın ve senden beklenen çağrı sayısı var. Dolayısıyla zor bir sektör, ve biz de başlarken “Biz neye başlıyoruz?” dedik, çünkü onlar inanmadıkça sen de kendini sorgulamaya başlıyorsun belli ölçülerde, onlar gibi olmasa da (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
58. En başta vardı, neler yapabileceğimi bilmiyorlardı bir kere, bunu onlara anlatmak biraz zor oldu. Mesela ben dahili numaraları ezberlemiştim bir gün içinde açıkçası, ama bir kaç gün ezberlemem beklendi, boş boş oturtular beni. Yapabileceğimi ben gösterdikten sonra anladılar (Melike, santral memuru).
59. [...] Ama bunun dışında, körlüğü kendimizi kanıtlamakla ilgili, görevimiz olmayan bir çok şeyi görev haline aldığımız için, artık bu da görev olmuş. Mesela bize ait olmayan bir çok işi yapabileceğimizi göstermek için – genelde bu bütün körlerde böyledir – hep sahiplenir işi olmayan, görevi olmayan şeyleri. Yapabileceklerinin hepsini alır ve de sonra o onun göreviymiş gibi ona kalır (Kemal, santral memuru).
60. Ben yapamayacağım için yapmıyor değilim, engellendiğim için bir şey yapmıyorum (Metin, memur).
61. Zaten görme engellilerin durumu çok gariptir, toplum gözünde ya çok iyisinizdir çok başarılısınızdır ama iş vermeye kalktığımız zaman “Lütfen dur” denilir. Yani çok takdir edirsiniz ama pratiğe geçtiğiniz zaman “Sen yorulma ya” gibi yaklaşımlar vardır (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
62. Çok iyi bir idari kadro ile çalışıyorum. Ama gerçekten destek vermeyen bir idari kadro olsaydı bu şekilde bu yılın sonunu getiremeyebilirdim. Çünkü en azından onlar önyargısızdı yapabileceğime inanıyorlardı ve ellerinden geleni yapıyorlardı [...] Diğer meslektaşım sanki yıllardır görmeyenlerle birlikte yaşamış gibi; onlar

benim şansımı belki, biraz genel toplumdan farklılar. Okulumda diğer öğretmen arkadaşlar da mümkün olduğunca yardımcı olmaya çalışıyorlar zorundasın (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).

63. Zaten bir süre sonra insanlar da alışabiliyorlar. İlk başta tabii çok sıkıntı olabiliyor, onlar şaşırabiliyor “Nasıl bilgisayar kullanabiliyor görmediği halde?” bunlar oluyor veya “Bunları buraya niye aldılar?” diyenler de olabiliyor. Hayatımızın bir parçası insanlarla uğraşmak ama yakın çevremiz bize bir süre sonra zaten alışıyor. Alışmayanlarla işimiz olmuyor zaten, yapacak bir şeyimiz yok, alışanlarla idare ediyoruz (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
64. Görmüyor ama bir şeyler yapabilir, sadece görmüyor, aklı çalışıyor sonuçta elleri çalışıyor. Benim duyduğumdan bile şüphe ediyorlardı. Babam ve ben müdür beyle konuşuyorduk, bizi duyabiliyor mu diyordu babama. Bu tür konularda bilinçlenmeleri gerek (Melike, santral memuru).
65. Genel olarak körlükle ilgili şeylerle karşılaşıyorum, ben kör olmasam daha aktif toplantılar düzenleyip sunum yapmaya gitmek isterim ama buna körlüğüm biraz engel oluyor gibi geliyor bana. Telefonda mesela ilgili kişiyle gayet güzel konuşuyoruz, ürünleri anlatıyorum vs., etkileniyor da anlatımdan, kör olduğumu da bilmiyor. Diyelim ki bir toplantı ayarlıyoruz, gidiyoruz benim kör olduğumu görünce bayağı bir şaşırıyor. Kimisi körlüğü mucizevi bir şey olarak görüyor, körlüğü öğrenince hayal kırıklığı oluyor (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
66. İş arkadaşları yaptığınız işe bakıyor, aynı işi yaptığını görüyor; o yüzden ciddi bir sıkıntı oluşturmuyor ama yönetici tutumları çalışanları da etkiliyor zaman zaman. O kadar baskın olmalısınız ki, yönetici tutumundan etkilenmemeleri gerekiyor. Ben onun mücadelesini çok verdim çünkü eninde sonunda etkileneceklerini biliyordum ama o yönetici tutumundan daha baskın bir rol oynamaya çalışıyordum. Yöneticim ne kadar görmezden geliyorsa, ben de işte o kadar aktif olmaya çalışıyordum (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
67. Bizden önce görme engelli anlamında engelli çalışan yoktu. Bizden sonra alınan olsa kolay olur (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
68. [...] ama burda sürekli velilerle uğraşmak zorundasın. Sürekli bir şey açıklamak zorundasın ve her zaman az gören biri olarak senin az görmenden kaynaklı olduğu düşünülüyor. Halbuki gören birinin sınıfında da bu tür şeyler yaşanır, bu tarz şeyler olur, ben yadsımıyorum kesinlikle, az gören biri olarak biraz daha risklidir ama bu olmayan bir şey değil. Gören bir öğretmenin sınıfında üç oluyorsa belki benim sınıfımda beş oluyor (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
69. Yalnız çalışıyor olmak, yalnız bırakılmak işyerinde, hem isteklerin taleplerin anlamında yalnız bırakılmak, hem insanların kendi aralarındaki iletişimlerinde seni dışarıda tutmaları yani kendi aralarında bir ahbaplık, dostluk yapmaları. Oturduğum ortamda benim masam bir köşede, diğer arkadaşlarım yedili bir grup, bir aradalar ve arkaları bana dönük şekilde masala konuşlandırılmış. Üzerlerinde ik tane klima var, fazla sıcak olursa rahatlayabilinler diye; benim tarafımda tek başımayım, sıcak rahatsız ediyor, kendi aralarındaki sohbeti duyuyorum bütün gün, aslında yaşadığım mobbing (Burak, santral memuru).

70. Mesela ben az gören birisiyim, aslında ışık ortamında görmemi çok verimli kullanabiliyorum. Mesela şu ortam benim için loş olabilir ama daha aydınlık ortamda çok daha rahat hareket edebilirim, çok daha rahat görmemi kullanabilirim; bu da beni bir görene daha az bağımlı kılardı. Ama şu an benim çalıştığım sınıfım bodrum katta ve merdivenlerden inmek zorundasınız. Merdivenlerden inmek değil mesele ama sınıfın çok karanlık olması. Sınıf merdivenin önünde bir kapısı var, bir çocuk mesela orda direk kapıdan çıkırsa direk merdivenin dibinde olması ve merdiveni bitirdiğinde bahçe kapısının açık oluyor olması ve zaman zaman bahçe kapısının, ana kapının da açık olup çocuğun dışarı çıkma ihtimalinin olması stresli şeyler. Fiziki koşullar daha uygun olsa çok daha iyi şeyler yapılabilirdi (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
71. Bir de beni başka şeyler de rahatsız ediyor şu anda: çalıştığım yer çok havasız, çok dar, kutu gibi bir oda. Sesler kulağı rahatsız ediyor çünkü çok kapalı bir oda, oksijen almakta zorlanıyorum, kokuyor, 7-8 tane insan çalışıyoruz orda. Benim bulunduğum tarafta herhangi bir klima ya da ortalığı serinletecek bir pervane yok; yani gerçekten çok rahatsız edici bir ortamda şu anda çalışıyorum (Burak, santral memuru).
72. Benim için yok, giriş çıkışlar falan çok rahat ama genel olarak inceleme yapıldığında engelliler için çok uygun olduğunu söyleyemem tuvaletlerin – ortopedik engelliler için. Benim için de mesela çiçeklendirme falan yapmışlar çalıştığımız ofisin içine – esasında güzel de belki ama çok dar bir alan zaten ve çok fazla hareketli biriyim ben, yürürken çok hızlı hareket ediyorum ve kolumu, dirseğimi, bileğimi falan çarpıyorum. Ama böyle çok da aşırı fiziksel sorunlar var diyemem. Sadece iş yerinin masaları falan çok yakın birbirine, geçecek alan açısından biraz zorlanıyorum. O da biraz benim tezcanlılığımdan da kaynaklanıyor olabilir ama biraz alan daracık (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
73. Engelliler düşünülerek yapılmamış. Asansörler mesela konuşmuyor, bazı alışveriş merkezlerinde katları söylüyor, bizde söylemiyor. Orda yanılığa düşünüyorum, kaçınıcı katta olduğumu bilemiyorum. Bedensel engelliler de çalışıyor – bacağı topallayan veya sadece eli kesik olanlar. Rampa yapmışlar bazı yerlere, engelli sandalyesi çıksın diye. Tamam güzel düşünülmüş ama bizim şirkette bir sistem var, her yere girerken kartımızı okutturmak zorundayız, kapılar kartla açılıyor, ama ordan bir tekerlekli sandalye geçemez, öyle bir sorun var. Kapılar var, hastane kapısı gibi, itince açılıyor. Ama tekerlekli sandalye geçemez ordan çünkü her zaman için birini kitliyorlar. Kapı kitli olduğu zaman öbürünü itirmek zorunda kalıyorsunuz (İbrahim, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
74. Kurumlarda asansör var ama asansörler konuşmuyor, görme engelliye uygun değil. Kabartma uyarıcılar yok; kat aralarında, kat haritaları, yönlendirici notlar, noktalar yok. Yani engelli erişimiyle ilgili hiçbir şekilde kurumlarda yeterlilik yok, o tabii büyük sıkıntı, onu da canlı baston diyoruz biz ona, gören birisi kullanarak mecburen gideriyoruz ya da artık ezberleme, alışma dediğimiz olay [...] Çalıştığımız yer, artık 10 yıldır geldiğimiz yer, mecburen her yeri ezberliyorsunuz, öğreniyorsunuz. Belki bastona da, canlı birisine de ihtiyaç kalmıyor ama buraya vatandaş da gelebiliyor – engelli vatandaş – onun için problem, çünkü oraya alışmak zorunda değil. Ordaki işi belki 1-2 saat, iki saat için her yeri ezberlemek zorunda da değil (Kemal, santral memuru).

75. Bağımsız hareketi olan her engelli hemen hemen her ortama –eğer başka bir engeli yoksa yürüme, duyma gibi – çok özel düzenlemelere ihtiyacı yoktur. Bizim de öyle, biraz dolaştıktan sonra binaya, ofis ortamına çok rahat uyum sağladım (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
76. Talep etmemize gerek yok, 2005 yılında çıkmış kanun var, 7 yıl süresi var. Tüm kamu kurum kuruluşları engelliye uygun hale getirilmek zorunda, 2012 yılında süreleri doluyor, 2012’den sonra bağlı bulunduğumuz dernekler, bu kamu kuruluşlarıyla ilgili yasal takipler başlatılacak. Ozida’yla ilgili bir şey bu, genel çıkan bir engelli yasası, orda var zaten. İmar yasası, imarla ilgili bir şey; yani sadece binalar değil yollar, kaldırımlar her yeri kapsayan bir şey (Kemal, santral memuru).
77. [...] sadece asansörler değişiyordu bir ara, şöyle bir talepte bulduk: “Madem asansörler değişiyor, bunu sesli yapın” Öyle sesli asansörün olması işimizi çok kolaylaştırdı, çözümünü buluyorsunuz, asansöre bindiğiniz zaman şu an kaçınıcı kattayım diye sorabiliyorsunuz ya da bastığımız kata gideceğini zaten biliyorsunuz, önemli değil ezberle bunları diğer ortamlarda yaşıyoruz zaten ama sesli asansörün olması bir kere oraya ait olduğunuzu hissettiriyor. Zor bir şey değil böyle büyük şirketler için. Öyle bir düzenleme istedik, yapıldı (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
78. Katlarda da mesela dokunarak anlayabileceğimiz rakamların olması olabilirdi [...] Ofisin giriş kapısı cam, o cam kapının üzerine farklı bir renk, fosforlu işimi kolaylaştırabilir [...] Ekstra şeyler istenebilir, yapılabilir ama bizim mücadelemiz hep öncelikle o ortama adapte olabilmek, dahil olabilmek. O da aynı işi yaptığımız zaman ancak dahil olabiliyorsunuz (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
79. Göreve başlayınca, stajyerlik eğitimine gittim. Devlet memurluğu kurallarını falan öğreniyorsun (İpek, English language teacher).
80. Hizmetiçi eğitimlere gittim, onlar da mevzuattan ibaret zaten ve tam tamına işlenmedi zaten. Onun hakimi de gelmiyor zaten o eğitimlere ve onlar geldi. “Bunlar değişmiş olabilir, inceleyin” dediler (Metin, memur).
81. Bir ay eğitim gördük programlar üstünde. Aynı zamanda konuşma teknikleri var, bir sürü şey üstünde eğitim gördük, bir ay sürdü. Ondandır zaten çağrıya atladık. Çok katkısı oldu, her şeyi orda öğrendim (İbrahim, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
82. Biz işe başlarken 3 aylık bir eğitim sürecinden geçtik; bütün sıkıntılarımızı orada yaşayıp attık. Normalde bankanın eğitimi iki veya üç hafta çalışanlarına verdiği eğitim, ama bizim 3 ay sürdü. Hemen hemen üç katı diyebilirim, üç kişiye yapılan bir eğitim. En ince ayrıntısına kadar düşünüldü, deneme aramaları bile yaptık. Yani bir çok sıkıntıyı aştık [...] Buraya geldiğimizde verilen eğitim tamamen bankayla ilgili bir eğitim, sistemlerle ilgili, finans veya prosedürler, şirketin kuralları, ne konuşmamız gerektiği. En baştaki eğitimi almadan işe başlamamız imkansızdı (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).

83. İş yerinde hiçbir eğitim almadım; normalde personele eğitim veriyorlar her konuda –santralde çalışanlara bile eğitim veriyorlar – beni eğitime çağırmadılar. Oryantasyon tarzı bir şey de olmadı, beni işe başladığım gün, çalışacağım odaya bıraktılar (Burak, santral memuru).
84. Bize bilgisayardan elektronik eğitimler geliyor, ama o eğitimler erişilebilir değil çünkü jaws programa eklenen o resmi okuyamıyor. Bu nedenle, bu eğitimleri tamamlamak için birine ihtiyacımız oluyor. Defalarca dilekçe yazdık ama hiçbir şey yapılmadı. Ben bu eğitimleri almak istiyorum ama bu şekilde imkanı yok. Bu yüzden, son gelen eğitimleri yapmadım çünkü tek başıma yapmak istiyorum (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
85. Hizmetiçi eğitimlere zorunlu olanlara katılıyorum. Şimdiye kadar iki tanesi iyiydi çünkü çok değerli bilgiler verdiler. Ancak İngilizce’yle alakalı olanlara gitmeyi sevmiyorum çünkü sadece slayt takıyorlar ve hiçbir şey hatırlamıyorum (İpek, English language teacher).
86. Oryantasyon yapıldı, herkese uygulanan şeydi. Ordaki sorunlar şuydu, herkese dağıtılan dökümanlar vs’nin benim ulaşabileceğim halde değildi. O nedenle, elektronik formatta istiyordum, ben istiyordum. Benim için özel bir şey yapmadılar (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
87. Ofis kullanımına dair bir eğitim vardı bir iki yıl önce. O şirketin önerisiyle yapılan bir şeydi ama ben kendim katılmadım. Herkes için yapılan bir şeydi ama körler için yapılmayacağını düşündüğüm için katılma kararı aldım (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
88. Bir kere mesela üniversitedeyken gitmiştik haftasonu seminerlerine kolejlerde, orda da öyleydi, çok görsel oyunlar öğretiyorlardı. Ben çok bir şey öğrenememiştim. Şimdi o tarz seminerlere gitmeye açıkçası biraz önyargılı bakıyorum, gideceğim şimdi bir sürü resimler falan; haklı olarak çünkü onlarda görsellik çok önemli bir şey (İpek, English language teacher).
89. İşle alakalı olduğu için, sürekli kendimizi güncellemeniz gerekiyor, işlemin fiyatı değişebiliyor; müşteri sorduğu zaman cevap vermek gerekiyor çünkü müşteri senin emin olmadığın anlarsa hem banka açısından hoş bir tutum olmayacağı için (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
90. Rehabilitasyon eğitimi de almıştım, baston kullanabiliyordum, yazı yazabiliyordum, kişisel eğitimle ilgili bir takım işleri halledebiliyordum. Bu konuda zaten pasif değildim, kişisel eğitimle ilgili – ütü yapma, yemek yapma, üst baş giyinme. Bunları kendi kendime aştım ama rehabilitasyon bir özgüven veriyor. Aslında rehabilitasyonu bitirdikten sonra “Ben bu bastonu niye kullanmıyordum” diye de düşündüm. Rehabilitasyon diye bir kuruluş olunca, burayı bitirdikten sonra sanki bir şeyleri halledebilecekmişsin gibi bir düşünce oluyordu. Oraya gitmek sanki zorunlu bir şeydi, bize orayı tavsiye eden de zaten bu şekilde tavsiye etmişti. Rehabilitasyona gittikten sonra hayatımla ilgili bir takım değişiklikler yapma gereksinimi bu yüzden duydum (Burak, santral memuru).

91. Hayır almadım (çalışırken). Aldığım eğitimin büyük katkısı oldu. Okulda öğrendiklerim birebir örtüşmez ama kesinlikle faydası oluyor (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
92. Benim okuduğum bölümün çok katkısı olduğunu düşünüyorum, aldığım eğitimlerin değil de. Aldığım eğitimin akademik olarak çok desteklediğini düşünüyorum. İnsanlar da bana bu tür geri bildirimlerde bulunuyorlar (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
93. Bazı tekniklerin oldu, hiçbir şey bilmeseydim bayağı zor olurdu herhalde [...] Okulda öğrendiklerimi kullanıyorum aslında, teknikler babında kullanıyorum ama bir süre sonra kendi oturmuş bir şeyin oluyor galiba (İpek, English language teacher).
94. İşle alakalı oldu. Örneğin yapmış olduğumuz kart satışı, kartla ilgili bilgi istediğimiz zaman zaman eğitimimiz oluyor. Bu hani bankacılık eğitim isteyen ve sürekli güncel olan bir durum olduğu için zaman zaman bizim online eğitim sistemlerimiz var. Erişilebilir değil mesela bazıları - websitesi üzerinden yapılıyor, flashlı filan resimler var - onları mesela arkadaşlarımız bize okuyor (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
95. “Biz bu eğitimleri hep birinin yardımıyla alıyoruz, bununla ilgili bir şey yapmamız lazım” dilekçe yazdık, hiçbir şey yapılmadı. Önemsemiyor çünkü herkes öylesine yapıyor işini, normal çalışanlar da (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
96. İletişim yok [...] Söyledim, şu anda da söylüyorum, işte en son talebimi ilettim, hiçbir durumumda değişiklik yok. Sanırım beni ayrıntı bile görmüyorlar, sözlerimi isteklerimi düşünmüyorlar galiba (Burak, santral memuru).
97. Müdür yardımcılara çok fazla söyledim, şu işleri öğretin diye. Onlarda da dediğim gibi geçiştirme vardı, çünkü şu an iş yaptırabildikleri birisi var (Metin, memur).
98. Biraz da olabilecek durumlar oldu – ileri derecede Excel, PowerPoint kullanımı vs – ama eğitim sunan kuruluş ve kişinin körlerle ilgili bir şeyi olmadığı için onları ben bilerek istemedim. Onların bana anlatamayacağını düşündüğüm için. Sundukları hizmetlerde engellilerin erişimini dikkate almadıkları için ben çok fazla bir talepte bulunmadım (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
99. Talebim olmadı, zaten hepsini öğrettiler. Bizim için uygun olan her şeyi düşünmüşler - önceden, neler yapılabilir diye - ona göre eğitim gördük (İbrahim, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
100. Kendim ulaşabileceğim bir şeyse, kendim araştırıp öğreniyorum (Melike, santral memuru).
101. Genel olarak, ilk başta araştırıyorum, nedir, benim ulaşabileceğim bir şey olur mu, herkesin ulaşabileceği kaynaklar var mı diye [...] Çok rutin bir şeyin olmaması, o tür şeyler sana kendini geliştirmen için zaman da bırakıyor işle ilgili

- olarak. ben daha çok kişisel olarak kendim planlayarak kazandım (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
102. Önce bunu nasıl yapabileceğimi internetten bakıyorum bir şey var mı diye (Metin, memur).
103. Özel eğitimle ilgili çalıştım, bu bilgilerimi kullandım ama bir sınıfın anasınıflı öğretmeni olmadım, dolayısıyla az gören biri olarak internetten bir şeyler araştırıp onu hayata uyarlamaya çalışıyorsun, somut olması gerekiyor benim için, somut olarak elimde olsa daha rahat anlayacağım (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
104. Arada bazen öyle görsel bir şey buldum mu kullanıyorum. Ekstra ya kendim hazırlıyorum ya da siteden bulduğum worksheetler oluyor (İpek, English language teacher).
105. Ama ani bilgi olduğu zaman internet var, erişilebilir sistem var banka içine yine (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
106. Şu anda yaptığım işi yapmamı sağlayan bilgileri daha çok kendim okuyarak, kendi tutorialları ihtiyaç duyduğumda okuyarak, düzenli bir eğitim alarak değil de, kendim belirleyerek kendim isteyerek yaptım sonuçta (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
107. İlk önce kendim kurcalıyorum, bazen bizim ekranlar değişiyor. İlk önce kendim deniyorum (İbrahim, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
108. Acilen çözülmesi gereken bir şey değilse, belli bir zamanım varsa işte o zaman kendim yapmaya çalışırım (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
109. Zaten santral eğitimini körler okulunda almıştık, az buçuk biliyorduk; ama bize verilen eğitimdeki o makinayla iş yerinde kullandığım makina aynı değildi. Sonuçta, her insan gibi normal bir telefon önünüzde ama özellikleri biraz daha farklı, cep telefonu gibi farz edin. Yeni bir cep telefonu alıyorsunuz, kullanmasını bilmiyorsunuz, deneme-yanılma yöntemiyle kullandıkça, zamanla öğreniyorsunuz; aynı şekilde [...] Hiç kimse makinanın başına otururken özelliğini bilerek başlamıyor, gün geçtikçe, biraz deneme-yanılma yöntemiyle (Kemal, santral memuru).
110. Körler rehabilitasyon merkezinde bir şeyler anlatmışlardı ama çok eğitime de gerek yok oraya başladığınız zaman öğrenebiliyorsunuz (Burak, santral memuru).
111. Santral sertifikası aldım 6 aylık görmüş olduğum rehabilitasyon kursunda aldım. İş yeri için yeterli değildi, santral kullanmasını biliyordum ama sonuçta iş yeri artık farklı birimler var, hangi birimler ne yapar? Bu konularda, ordakilerle çalıştıkça öğrendim. Tam olarak öğrenmem 1.5 sene sürmüştür (Ozan, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
112. Dediğim gibi, okullara stajyer öğrenci olarak gidiyorsun ama daha çok gözlemcisin, sonuçta o sınıfın bir öğretmeni var, sınıfın öğretmenine yardımcı olarak gitmek çok başka o sınıfın öğretmeni olmak çok başka [...] sensin

öğretmen olarak tanınan kişi, her yaptığım doğru veya yanlış tekrar sana dönecek (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).

113. Normalde yapılması gereken şeydi: bizim için ayrıca sınıflar yaratılacaktı, jaws programı kurulacaktı, program tek tek bize öğretilmesi gerekiyordu. Ama onların hiçbiri olmadı ve dolayısıyla o eğitimlerin benim için hiçbir anlamı yok. Ben asıl programı çağrı merkezine gittiğimde, bilgisayarı kurduğumda öğrendim (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
114. Şu anki noktada, konunun neyle alakalı olduğunu ve artık kime gitmem gerektiğini biliyorum; o birime gidiyorum ya da yönlendiriyorum. Benim cevaplama gereken bir şeyse, ben nerden öğrenmem gerekiyorsa oradan öğrenip aktarıyorum ya da “Ben sizi daha sonra arayım” diyebiliyorum, hemen cevaplayamayacağım bir şeyse (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
115. [...] daha önceki tecrübelerim de bu yönde fayda sağladı bana (Beyza, anaokulu öğretmeni).
116. Çıkarım yapabiliyorum bildiğim bir konuysa. Mesela daha önceden yaşamış olduğum, öğrenmiş olduğum konulardan çıkarım yapabiliyorum. “Daha evvelden şöyle bir seferde şu yaşanmıştı ve bunun sonucunda şunu yapmıştık” diyip yeni çıkarımlara gelebiliyorum (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
117. Önceden bunu nasıl çözeriz, sıkıntı ne, napılabilir; bir şekilde formülünü bulmak için uğraşıyordum ve de o işi öğrenmek için “Bu nasıl olur? Bir daha başıma böyle bir şey gelse, napılabilir? Bunu öğreneyim ki yeniden böyle bir şey olursa, ben bu işte bu kadar vakit kaybetmeyeyim ya da bu sıkıntıyı bu kadar ağır yaşamayayım” diye öğrenir, o konuyu bilgi hazineme koyardım (Kemal, santral memuru).
118. Hep sorarak öğrendim ben [...] Bir soruyla karşılaşıyorum telefonda. O soruyu öğrenmek için gidiyorum şefime ya da daha deneyimli arkadaşlarıma soruyorum. O şekilde öğrendim (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
119. Acilen çözülmesi gereken bir işse, en iyi bilen birine gider ve onun çözmesini, yardımcı olmasını isterim (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
120. [...] bulamazsam bilen birisine - bilebileceğini düşündüğüm birisine sorarım. Ondan bulamazsam da, ilçeyi arar onlara sorarım (Metin, memur).
121. [...] yanımızda zaten bir sürü insan var, ayağa kalktığımızda hemen birisi geliyor. Arkadaşım veya yöneticim geliyor, mutlaka birisi geliyor, o konuda bir problem olmuyor, anlık bilgileri zaten buluyoruz. İnternet başlıca kaynak, daha sonra da kişiler (Tarık, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
122. Ordaki işin uzmanı kimse [...] Bir kişinin o alanda çok başarılı olduğunu görüyorsam ve bunu biliyorsam, hiç çekinmem ve onu hiç gurur yapmam, gider sorarım (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).

123. Bilen birisinin olduğunu düşünüyorsam - daha önce bu şeyle karşılaşmış olabileceğini - yöneticime sorabilirim ya da başka bu alanda deneyimi olabilecek birisi varsa (Ömer, ürün yöneticisi).
124. Başta bilmiyordum kimi kime, nasıl bağlayacağımı. Sordum, memurların kimin ne işe baktığını sordum memur arkadaşlardan birine. İş arkadaşlarımdan öğrendim (Melike, santral memuru).
125. Başa çıkmadığım bir durumla ilgili mutlaka sorarım; onu en iyi kimden öğrenebileceğimi tespit ediyorsam, mutlaka ondan yardım isterim. Arkadaşlarım olabilir, yönetici ve çalışan kadrosuna yakın birini de tercih ederim (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
126. Bununla ilgili bilgi alabileceğim bütün birimlere, doğru yeri bulasıya kadar herkese sorardım (Kemal, santral memuru).
127. En başta hemen yanımdakine soruyordum, sonrasında asıl muhataplarını bulmaya başladım (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).
128. Bulursam buluyorum, bulamazsam soruyorum. Etrafımda kim müsaitse çünkü insanlar genelde çağrıda oluyor, onları bulamazsam takım liderlerine, onlar da olmazsa herhangi birini buluyorum (İbrahim, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
129. İlk önce, kendi çevremdeki görme engellilere danışırım, onların fikrini alırım (Ozan, çağrı merkezi çalışanı).
130. Bizim aramızda bu çok vardır körler arasında, "Bende bu var sende var mı?" diye (İpek, English language teacher).
131. Bankanın bir takım uzmanlık gerektiren konuları var, ayrıntıları var. Sordum, genelde cevap alamadım, çevremde konuşulanları dinleyerek bir şeyler öğrenmeye çalıştım. Sormak da çok şey olmuyor, insanların kendi aralarında konuştuklarını dinleyerek, bankacılığın ne olduğunu, nasıl yapıldığını o şekilde anlamaya çalıştım. Hala bilgi eksikliğim var (Burak, santral memuru).
132. [...] çünkü bazı insanlar bilgi paylaşmayı sevmiyorlar; o, o durumu çözerken yanından hiç gitmem, uzaklaşmam, mutlaka onu takip ederim. Kimi aradı, nereye telefon etti, nasıl yaptı, hangi stratejiyi izledi, yolcuya ne dedi, nasıl davrandı. Hepsine bakarım, gözlemlerim (Gözde, müşteri ilişkileri uzmanı).
133. Burda alıyorum aslında santral eğitimini. Eğitim şöyle: orda bilen biri vardı, benden önce yerime bakan, o gösterdi bir kere. Zaten küçük bir santral, o yüzden zor olmadı (Melike, santral memuru).
134. Hiç kimse için düzenli bir eğitim yok aslında, sadece iyi bilen birinin yanına oturtturulur, o bir kaç gün gözlem yapar ama hiç kimse benim yanıma gelip oturmadı. Böyle gönüllü bir arkadaşım vardı özellikle, ama gönüllü yani şefin yönlendirmesiyle değil - normalde bunu şef yönlendirir. Ama bende hiç öyle bir şey olmadı. Sadece o arkadaşımın kendi ilgisi, isteği üzerine gelip bir şeyler anlattığı oldu (Aslı, ekip planlama operatörü).

REFERENCES

- Altay, İ. (2007). *Informal learning in the workplace: A case study of software engineers in a private bank in Istanbul*. Master of Arts, Boğaziçi University.
- Anaç, A. & Öznaneci, M. (2009). *Country Report: Turkish Republic*. The Second Regional Workshop on the Enhancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. Prime Ministry - Administration for Disabled People.
- Arthur, S. & Zarb, G. (1995). Barriers to Employment for Disabled People. *Measuring Disablement in Society: Working Paper 4*.
- Barnes, C. (1992). Disability and employment. *Personnel Review*, 21(6), 55-74.
- Bell, C. R. (1977). Informal learning in organizations. *Personnel Journal*. 56(6), 280-313.
- Bengisu, M., Izbirak, G. & Mackieh, A. (2008). Work-Related Challenges for Individuals Who Are Visually Impaired in Turkey. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 102(5) 284-294.
- Billett, S. (2002). Critiquing workplace learning discourses: Participation and continuity at work. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 34 (1), 56-67.
- Bohman, R. V. (1992). *Employability factors of visually impaired in Utah*. Published Doctor of Education Dissertation, Brigham young University.
- Boud, D. & Garrick, J. (1999). Understandings of workplace learning. In D. Boud & J. Garrick (Eds.) *Understanding learning at work*. (pp. 1-11) London: Routledge.
- Brockett, R. G. & Hiemstra, R. (1991). *Self-direction in adult learning: Perspectives on theory, research and practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Cedefop Glossary. Retrieved January 20, 2011, from <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about/cedefop/projects/validation-of-non-formal-and-informal-learning/europeaninventory-glossary.aspx>].
- Cherry, K. E., Keller, M. J. & Dudley, W. N. (1992). A needs assessment of persons with visual impairment: Implications for older adults and service providers. *Journal of Gerontology*, 17, 99-116.
- Cofer, D. (2000). *Informal Workplace Learning*. Practice Application Brief. NO 10. U.S. Department of Education: Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
- Colley, H., Hodkinson, P. & Malcolm, J. (2002). *Non-formal learning: mapping the conceptual terrain*. A consultation report. Leeds: University of Lifelong Learning Institute.

- Crudden, A., McBroom, L. W., Skinner, A. L. & Moore, J. E. (1998) *Comprehensive examination of barriers to employment among persons who are blind or visually impaired*. Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision, Mississippi State University.
- Çimen, C. (2009). *Professional development in corporate training through learning experiences in the workplace*. Master of Arts. Boğaziçi University.
- Darensbourg, B. L. (2008) . *An investigation of the variables related to competitive employment and earnings of vocational rehabilitation consumers with blindness or visual impairments*. Published Doctor of Education Dissertation, The University of Texas.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Jossey Bass: San Francisco.
- Disability Action Plan 2006-2015. Recommendation (2006)5 of the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society: improving the quality of people with disabilities in Europe 2006-2015.
- Elias, J.L., & Merriam, S. (1980). *Philosophical foundations of adult education*. Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company.
- Ellinger, A. D. (2005). Contextual factors inhibiting informal learning in a workplace setting: The case of “Reinventing itself company”. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*. 16 (3), 389-415.
- Enos, M. D., Kehrhahn, M. T., & Bell, A. (2003). Informal learning and the transfer of learning: How managers develop proficiency. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 14 (4), 369–387.
- Eraut, M. (2000). Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70, 113–136.
- Eraut, M. (2004). Informal learning in the workplace, *Studies in Continuing Education*, 26 (2), 247- 274.
- European Social Charter (Revised), 1996. European Treaty Series – No. 163. Strasbourg.
- Garrison, D. R. (1997). Self-directed learning: Toward a comprehensive model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48 (1), 18-33.
- Giesen, J. M., Graves, W. H, Schmitt, S., Lamb, A. M., Cook, D., Capps, C., Boyet, K. (1985). *Predicting work status outcomes of blind/severely visually impaired clients of state rehabilitation agencies*. Mississippi State: Mississippi State University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision.

- Gillies, R. M., Knight, K. & A. J. Baglioni, A. J. (1998). World of Work: perceptions of people who are blind or vision impaired. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 45(4), 397-409.
- Golub, D. B. (2006). A model of successful work experience for employees who are visually impaired: The results of a study. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 100(12), 715-725.
- Graham, M. J. (1997). *Work experiences for blind youth: a system for successful employment*. Published Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Northern Colorado.
- Hager, P. (1998). Recognition of informal learning: Challenges and issues. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 50(4), 521-535.
- Hartree, A. (1984). Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy: A Critique. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 3(3), 203-210.
- Houtenville, A. J. (1997). A comparison of the economic status of working-age persons with visual impairments and those of other groups. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 97(3), 133-148.
- İşkur (2010). Turkish Employment Organization. Statistical Yearbook.
- Keller, A., Schretzmann, B. & Stegie, R. (1999). Job satisfaction amongst visually impaired people in Germany: Results of a study. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 17(1), 31-35.”
- Kelley, C. (2001). *Factors that impact the employment history of employable visually impaired blind adults who have completed high school in the state of Tennessee*. Published Doctor of Education Dissertation, Tennessee State University.
- Kirchner, C., Scmeidler, E., & Todorov, A. (1999). *Looking at employment through a lifespan telescope: Age, health and employment status of people with serious visual impairment*. Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision, Mississippi State University.
- Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-directed learning: A guide for learners and teachers*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall/Cambridge.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*. Chicago: Follet Publishing Company.
- Knowles, M. S., Holton III, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resources development*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, Inc.

- La Grow, S. J. (2004). Factors that Affect the Employment Status of Working-Age Adults with Visual Impairments in New Zealand, *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 98(9), 546-559.
- La Grow, S.J. & Daye, P. (2005). Barriers to employment identified by blind and vision-impaired persons in New Zealand. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 26, 173-185.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning. Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, I. S. & Park, S. K. (2008). Employment status and predictors among people with visual impairments in South Korea: Results of a national survey. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 102(3), 147-159.
- Livingstone, D. W. (2001). *Adult informal learning: Definitions, gaps and future research*. NALL Working Paper No.21.
- Lohman, M. C. (2000). Environmental inhibitors to informal learning in the workplace: A case study of public school teachers. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 50 (2) 83-101.
- Malcolm, J., Hodkinson, P. & Colley, H. (2003). The interrelationships between informal and formal learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning*. 15(8) 313-318.
- Marsick, V. J. & Volpe, M. (1999). The nature and need for informal learning. *Advances in Human Developing Resources*. 1(1), 1-9.
- Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (1990). *Informal and incidental learning in the workplace*. London: Routledge.
- Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (1992). Towards a theory of informal and incidental learning in organizations. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 11(4), 287-300.
- Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (2001). Informal and Incidental Learning. In *Critical thinking in adult education*. (pp. 151-160) John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- McDonnall, M. C. & Crudden, A. (2009). Factors affecting the successful employment of transition-age youths with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 103(6), 329-341.
- Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (1999). *Learning in adulthood*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Merriam, S. B. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. In *Critical thinking in adult education* (pp. 27-37). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Merriam, S. B. and associates (2002). *Qualitative research in practice : examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., and Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*.(3rd Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research. A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 32(1), 3-24.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Mezirow, J. (1994b). Understanding transformational theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 44(4), 222-232.
- Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 46(3), 158-172.
- Moore, J. E. & Wolffe, K. E. (1997). Employment considerations for adults with low vision. In A. L. Corn & A. J. Koenig (Eds.). *Foundations of low vision: Clinical and functional perspectives* (pp. 340- 362). New York: American Foundation for the Blind.
- Naraine, M. D. (2005). *Lived Workplace experiences of employees who are blind or visually impaired: A qualitative analysis*. Published Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Newton, R., Marcus, O. and Thomas, P. (2007). Disabled people's experiences in the workplace environment in England. *Equal Opportunities International* 26(6), 610-623.
- O'Day, B. (1999). Employment barriers for people with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 93(10), 627-642.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, New York: Basic Books.
- Schugurensky, D. (2000). *The forms of informal learning: Towards a conceptualization of the field*. NALL Working Paper No,19.
- Shaw, A., Gold, D. & Wolffe, K. (2007). Employment-related experiences of youths who are visually impaired: How are these youths faring? *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 101(1), 7-21.

- Smith, T. (2002). Diversity and disability: Exploring the experiences of vision impaired people in the workplace. *Equal Opportunities International*, 21(8), 59-72.
- Smith, P. J. (2003). Workplace learning and flexible delivery. *Review of Educational Research*. 73(1) pp. 53-88.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research. Studying how things work*. The Guilford Press: New York.
- Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993). United Nations. A/RES/48/96.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). United Nations.
- Thornton, P. & Lunt, N. (1995). *Employment for disabled people: Social obligation or individual responsibility?*. Social Policy Report, University of York.
- Tillsley, C. (1997). Gaining access to employment opportunities. *British Journal of Visual Impairment*, 15(2), 67- 71.
- Tough, A. (1999). *Reflections on the study of adult learning*. Centre for the Study of Education and Work, OISE/UT. WALL Working Paper 8.
- Turkish Statistical Institution (2002). *Turkey Disability Survey*. Retrieved August 18, 2011, from http://www.ozida.gov.tr/arastirma/tr_ozurluler_arastirmasi/blm1.pdf.
- Uppal, S. (2005). Disability, workplace characteristics and job satisfaction. *International Journal of Manpower*, 26(4), 336-349.
- Usher, R., Bryant, I., & Johnston, R. (1997). *Adult education and the post-modern challenge: Learning beyond the limits*. New York: Routledge.
- Wolffe, K. & Candela, T. (2002). Expanding the labor pool: Recruiting, hiring, and retaining workers with visual impairments. *Employment Relations Today*, 29(3), 59-68.
- Wolffe, K. & Candela, T. (2002). A qualitative analysis of employers' experiences with visually impaired workers. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 96, 622-634.
- Wolffe, K., and S. Spungin (2002). A glance at worldwide employment of people with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 96(4), 245-254.
- World Health Organization (2001). ICF, International classification of functioning, disability and health.

World Health Organization Fact Sheets. Retrieved August 14, 2011, from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/>.

World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, 1982. United Nations, New York.

Yılmaz, Z. (2004). *The barriers faced by disabled people during their working life and the factors influencing these barriers*. Master of Arts, Hacettepe University.

Young, C. E. (1995). A focus group on employment. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*. 89(1), 14-18.