

System Analysis and Solution Suggestions for Problems Occurred During Orientation Process in Distance Education

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Abstract: In this study, it was aimed at determining the problems encountered by the distance education students in orientation process through system analysis. In the light of this purpose, a needs analysis was conducted. During the needs analysis, literature was reviewed and the experts were consulted for determining the problem statement. The study group of the study was composed of 44 students who were taught through distance education at Distance Education Center, a state university. The data were collected from the students, technical support group and instructors. The survey and interview techniques were used during the data collection. The frequency, percentage and mean statistics were used in data analysis. When the problems were observed, it was agreed that each of them was an educational problem. It was foreseen that all these educational problems could be overcome through an online orientation training taking the recommendations of technical support and instructors.

Keywords: student orientation; distance education; system analysis

Orientation can be defined as individuals' adaptation to a new situation or new environment (Bilgili, 2007). The individuals might be subjected to an orientation when they start a new school or a profession in order to find out the opportunities and rules of the environment (Ceylan, 2005). The purpose of the orientation given at the beginning of the process is to make students familiar with the new situation and new environment. The required preparation and organizations should be completed before the students come to school so that this service could accomplish its goals (Yeşilyaprak, 2003).

As in traditional environments, the orientation process is also important in distance education, which has developed in parallel with the change in the understanding of technology and education (Scagnoli, 2001). In courses taught through distance education, some applications and other advanced technologies like multimedia technologies, video, graphics, voice-based communication that should be installed and customized in order to accomplish the objectives of the course are available. Because of the additional technical requirements, an online preparatory environment that introduces technologies and platform for students' achievements is important (Mencsh, 2009). At the end of the studies, it was found that orientation was a recommended solution for the problems experienced in distance education systems such not knowing how to communicate with others, having technical problems, not finding a solution for these problems and the rate of leaving the distance education system was high (Cho, 2012). Orientation trainings are becoming more and more important in distance education so that the students who are not familiar with the system, course procedures and the process could get familiar with the environment (Bergmann & Raleigh, 1998). However, it was seen that it was not given enough importance to the orientation training services in Turkey although there are many online vocational, undergraduate, graduate and certificate programs. It was seen that there are only some sample online course recordings or limited number of videos showing how to share audio, video and screen under the title of orientation services. However, when the samples in

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abroad were examined, it could be seen that there were some websites in which some examinations were given in order to measure the technical knowledge of the registered students; there were some detailed information on what kind of problems the students might encounter throughout the process; and additionally, there were some evaluation web pages that determined whether the information were learned or not. When the literature was reviewed, it was found that the orientation program given for the online courses had the same objectives with the one given for the school environment and both of them increased the academic and social interaction and developed the sense of belonging to virtual learning community (Robinson, Burns & Gaw, 1996, Cited in Scagnoli, 2001). Different learning skills are required for online learner when compared to the traditional learners and the orientation that is designed for this group should be related to the different skill sets (Wilson, 2008). The participation into the orientation program which includes the teaching of tools in e-learning system in distance education and organized before the first course could establish self-confidence (Rovai, 2003). Hence, in a study by Attack (2003) in which the web-based learning experiences of the nurses were examined, the findings that nurses spent more time for learning how the system worked and they could not concentrate on the content indicated that the orientation before the process was required. Moreover, it was also found in the studies that the orientation training given at the beginning of the distance education process had positive effects on the students' leaving the distance education (Lynch, 2001) and their performances (Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). Furthermore, the orientation training offered for the distance education programs could make students aware of the new educational technologies and pedagogy that they would use during the course (Mensch, 2009). Moreover, in the study carried out by Ali and Leeds (2009), it was found that the performances of the students taking orientation service were higher than that of the ones who did not take any training and this indicated that orientation process was quite important in distance education process. Bruso (2001) stated that the purpose of the orientation was to develop computer skills for some students while it was to help to get familiar with the online course environment for some students.

The studies indicated that orientation training had positive effects on students' leaving the distance education and their effective communication skills. In Lynch's (2001) study in which the effects of orientation training on distance education students were examined, it was found that 89% of the students participating into the orientation training developed technology skills, 74% of them developed independent learning. Moreover, 95% of the students indicated effective communication skills through web based tools. Orientation training had also positive effects on the student dropout rate. The rate of the students who left the course decreased by 15% and the registrations increased by 90%. Similarly, in the study carried out by McVay (2000), it was found that the technological skills, self-management, connectedness and independence feelings of students with online orientation training increased and their dropout rate decreased. In a study conducted by Wojciechowski and Palmer (2005), similar findings were obtained. There is a strong relationship between the students' participation into the orientation session and their performances in online course. The findings of these studies are the important indicators for the positive effects of orientation in distance education process.

In this perspective, the purpose of the study is to determine the problems encountered in the orientation process by the students who were newly registered to the distance education and to provide solutions for these problems. Within this framework, system analysis was carried out in order to determine the current problem statements. In the study, distance education which was an educational system was taken into account and it was attempted to determine the educational problems in orientation process through needs analysis.

Method

Research Design

In this study, case study method was used. Yin (1984) described case study as a research method that examined the researched phenomenon in its own environment. The situation taken in this study was the orientation processes of the students who newly registered for the vocational and undergraduate programs at a distance education center. The registration process is the period between the legal registration of the students for their programs and the starting of the online courses. Online course process is the process in which the registered students followed their classes on the Internet via Adobe Connect software. Online examination stage was the use of Moodle learning management system in order to complete the evaluation. The stages of the orientation process are illustrated in Fig. 1.

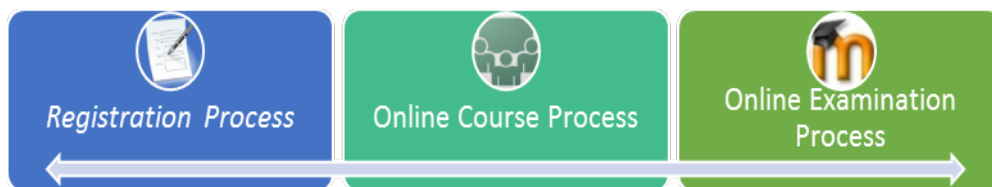


Fig. 1. Orientation Process

Sample of Research

The study group was composed of 44 students who were taught at Distance Education Center, a state university, through distance education. Of the students in sampling group, 40.9% (n=18) were female students and 59.1% (n=26) were male students. In terms of their educational background, 38.6% (n=17) of them were college students and 61.4% (n=27) of them were undergraduate students. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 40 and the mean age was 24.5. Moreover, 4 instructors and 4 technical support members were consulted for their views about the orientation process. Moreover, 4 instructors, who taught newly registered students via distance education, and 4 technical support group members working at this department were interviewed on the orientation process. Each interview lasted for 25 minutes on average. The interviewed instructors were coded as I1, I2, I3 and I4, the technical support group members were coded as T1, T2, T3 and T4. Of the teaching staff, I1 and I2 had been teaching for three years; and I3 and I4 had been teaching for two years. The working experience of the technical support group members who provided technical support for instructors in distance education process was more than five years. The reason for choosing this study group was to take all elements (student, instructor, technical support group member) in distance education system within the context of system analysis.

Research Process

Within the context of the study, the orientation process of the distance education students was taken with system approach. System is the combination of elements that are in an interaction with each other in order to accomplish an objective (Yalın, 2008). The elements constructing the system are in an interaction with each other. Each element in the system affects the outcome. In the distance education system taken within the framework of this approach, student, instructors and technical support group members were taken as the system elements and system analysis was carried out. The first stage of system analysis is needs analysis (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1997). The needs analysis is a method that determines whether the instruction is required for the target audience or not, and if so,

what kind of instruction is required. The needs analysis is taken as the determination of the current situation and presenting the intended situation. If there is an instructional problem, instructional designer attempts to determine the needs presenting the available situation (Ocak, 2011). Data were collected from the students, instructors and technical support group members who were the elements of systems in order to define the problems that the registered students experienced in distance education system; and needs analysis carried out. At the end of the needs analysis, the problems that newly registered students experienced were determined and solutions were recommended for the problems that could be solved with instructional methods. Within the scope of this study, the problems were found to be as instructional problem and related to the orientation process. Afterwards, considering that the problems might be removed by means of training, a prototype website was designed for the students. The recommendations of the participants were taken into account in terms of what and how would be presented as the content of the website. Meanwhile, online orientation programs developed by different universities for online courses were examined. In general, the programs included the information related to the nature of the distance education and technical requirements. However, it was also seen that the determination of the student competencies for taking an online course was also included in addition to the aforementioned information in some programs. All these data were taken into consideration while designing prototype website.

Data Collection Tool and Process

In data collection procedure, the data were collected by means of survey and interview forms. The survey was conducted in order to determine the problems students encountered from the registration stage to the online examination period. Within the scope of this objective, an item pool was created by the researchers and three instructional education experts were consulted. In the light of these opinions, some items were omitted and some were modified. The final form of the survey that was composed 23 items in 5-point Likert type scale was completed.

Additionally, semi-structured interview forms were also used as the data collection tool. The instructors and technical support group members were interviewed in order to determine the problems students encountered throughout the process. The interview questions were prepared by the researchers and experts were consulted in order maintain content validity. In the interviews with the instructors, the views related to what kind of problems newly registered students encountered in which stages, what kind of solutions were recommended and the content and the presentation of the possible orientation training were asked. In the interviews with the technical support group members, the questions related the problems experienced, the solutions for these problems and what could be done by the institution in order to make the orientation training more efficient were posed.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the survey questions, frequency and percentage analyses were conducted in order to examine what kind of problems the students encountered. Via MAXQDA, content analysis was applied to the data set gathered through interviews.

Findings

The Findings Related to the Problems Encountered in the Orientation Process

The problems encountered in the orientation process were presented under three main themes as the problems encountered in registration, the problems encountered in online courses and the problems encountered in online course process.

The Findings Related to the Problems Encountered in the Orientation Process. The registration process included the main processes from how the students logged in to the distance education system to how the distance education courses were carried out. Within this framework, the main problems were determined in this stage through the questions asked to the students. The findings related to the problems are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The problems students encountered in registration process

Registration Process	Yes		Partly		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Did you know how to access the course program?	15	34.1	15	34.1	14	31.8
Did you know how to access the courses?	20	45.5	13	29.5	11	25.0
Did you know how to get the username and password that you use to access the course system?	19	43.2	12	27.3	13	29.5
Did you have any idea on how the courses were going to be conducted?	13	29.5	19	43.2	12	27.3
Did you know how to reach people that you can get information about the system?	16	36.4	18	40.9	10	22.7

When the problems that students encountered in registration process were examined, 31.8% of the students responded as “no” and 34.1 of them responded as “partly” to the question “*Did you know how to access course program?*” These findings indicated that students had problems in accessing the program in registration process. Moreover, when the responses given by the students to the question “*Did you know how to get the username and password that you use to access the course system?*” were examined, 29.5% of the students responded as “no” and 27.3% of them responded as “partly”. To the question “*Did you have any idea on how the courses were going to be conducted?*”, 27.3% of the students responded as “no” and 43.2% of the students responded as “partly”. Finally, when the question “*Did you know how to reach people that you can get information about the system?*” was examined, 22.7% of the students responded as “no” and 40.9% of them responded as “partly”.

These finding indicated that most of the students experienced problems in terms of accessing the course program, getting username and password for the system and reaching people in order to get information about the course procedure and system during the registration process.

Similar findings were reached in the interviews with the technical support group members as well. The problems students encountered during the registration process are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Students' problems in the registration process according to technical support group

The problems Encountered during the Registration Process	f
Misinformation or the lack of information about what distance education is	4
Username and password problems	4
The problem of accessing course interface	3
The problem of accessing course program	2
The lack of knowledge about the required software and hardware	2
The problems caused by the student information system	2
Not knowing the person who is responsible for the problem	2

All of the technical support group members interviewed stated that the main problems encountered during the registration process was that the students did not have any idea or they had misinformation about the distance education. It was particularly mentioned that the students had misconceptions about open education and distance education and they had misconceptions like those that they did not have compulsory attendance and they would take the examinations in exam periods after studying printed materials. The other problem was that students confused their usernames and passwords for online courses with the ones they used for the student information system. In addition to this, the problems such as not knowing how to reach the course interface (f=3), not reaching course schedule (f=2), lack of knowledge about the minimum requirements of the distance education system (f=2) and the problems related to the student information system (f=2) were also mentioned. Moreover, not knowing whom or which unit they should contact when they encountered a problem was another problem (f=2). Some statements of the technical support group members related to this process are presented below.

The students who are registered for distance education do not actually have enough knowledge about what distance education is and how the courses will be conducted. At first steps, the problems related to the username and passwords are experienced. They also have some problems while using the system used for the courses (...) (T1)

(...)One of the most important problems that we experience is that students call us for all questions and problems. They also ask us the questions which they actually should ask the course instructor and student affairs office. This is a big problem, I think. (T2)

Some students call us in order to ask what they should do after the registration. They would like to get information whether they will be given any printed material and there is compulsory attendance or not. Although, we inform that they have compulsory attendance, they state that their friends enrolled at open education did not have this kind of obligation. The first thing that generally comes to their mind when distance education is mentioned is the open education system. Firstly, we inform them about the program they are enrolled in, and then, we tell them how they could follow the courses on the Internet and what the technical requirements are for following the courses (...) (T4)

As for the interviews with the instructors, it was stated that there were not too many problems expressed by the students related to the registration process. They only mentioned that they had had problems about getting information about the distance education and not knowing which department they should have consulted about their problems. A statement about this process from an instructor is presented below.

As distance education students are away, they do not know the procedures here. They are not aware of the fact that everyone is responsible for different duties. Mostly, course instructor is in front of them and, I think, they believe that course instructors are responsible for all questions and problems. In years, they become more conscious... They do not know what to do in procedural situation (I1)

The Problems Encountered in Online Course Process. Online courses are the courses on the internet in which the students and the instructors joined synchronously. The students were expected to use information and communication technologies at the basic level so that the courses were carried out effectively. Within this framework, the problems the students encountered in live courses are presented in Table 3.

When the data related to the problems encountered in online course, it was seen that 36.4% of the students responded as “no” and 25.0% of them responded as “partly” to the question “*Did you know how to control voice before the course?*”. Another question was “*Did you know how to take turn in the online course?*” and 36.4% of the students responded as “no” and 18.2% of them responded as “partly”. To

the question "Did you know how to send voice?", 31.8% of the students responded as "no" and 27.3% of them responded as "partly". Another question was "Did you know how to send video?" and 40.9% of the students responded as "no" and 22.7% of them responded as "partly". To the question "Did you know how to share your screen?", 59.1% of the students responded as "no" and 13.6% of them responded as "partly". Finally, to the question "Did you know whom to reach when there was a problem in a online course?", 36.4% of the students responded as "no" and 13.6% of them responded as "partly".

Table 3

The problems students encountered in online courses process

During the Online Course	Yes		Partly		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Were you able to access the system with your username and password without any problems?	31	70.5	5	11.4	8	18.2
Did you know how to reach the announcements about the courses?	20	45.5	16	36.4	8	18.2
Did you know how to reach the weekly course schedule?	26	59.1	14	31.8	4	9.1
Did you have any idea about the infrastructure (the requirement of the ADSL connection, etc.) in order to access the online courses?	31	70.5	10	22.7	3	6.8
Did you know the required hardware in order to access the online courses?	29	65.9	10	22.7	5	11.4
Did you know how to control voice before the course?	17	38.6	11	25.0	16	36.4
Did you know how to take turn in the online course?	20	45.5	8	18.2	16	36.4
Did you know how to send voice?	18	40.9	12	27.3	14	31.8
Did you know how to send video?	16	36.4	10	22.7	18	40.9
Did you know how to share your screen?	12	27.3	6	13.6	26	59.1
Did you know the private chat which is used for one-to-one communication in the course?	22	50.0	6	13.6	16	36.4
Did you know whom to reach when there was a problem in a online course?	15	34.1	13	29.5	16	36.4
Did you know how to access the content shared in online course?	23	52.3	9	20.5	12	27.3
Did you know how to access the video recordings of the courses you could not attend?	25	56.8	9	20.5	10	22.7

These findings indicated that students had problems in terms of voice control, turn taking, voice transferring, video transferring, screen sharing and reaching someone for technical problems during the online course process. It was also seen that the students did not have too many problems when the items related to the online examination procedure.

The similar findings were also obtained in interviews with the technical support group members. Within the framework of the interviews, the problems students encountered in online courses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Problems student encountered in online course process according to technical support group

The Problems Experienced in Course Process	f
The problems related to the use of online course system (voice, video etc. technical problems)	4
Communication problem with the instructor	3

The main problems students experienced in online courses process were expressed as the problems related to the use of online course system (f=4). These problems were about not being able to share their voices or videos or having problems in screen and file sharing. Moreover, it was stated that the students could only communicate with their instructors in online courses and this was not enough; or they did not know how to communicate with their instructors after school or they could only communicate via e-mail (f=3). Some statements of the technical support group members about this process are presented below.

During the online courses, the most important problem occurred at the beginning of the semester resulted from students' not knowing how to use the system, and in addition to this, they did not read the documents provided. Particularly, the students with low level of computer competence could not use the course system effectively. They call for help when they could not transfer their voices or they had problems in file sharing. They stated that they could not receive their instructors' voices or videos because of some technical problems in their connection or their computers. Infact, these problems occurred as the students did not know the system requirements. When the individuals connect to the system via mobile internet instead of ADSL, they inevitably experienced problems because of the the data transfer speed (...) (T3)

Some students call us in order to reach the instructors. "I should ask a question about my assignment to the instructor A, how can I reach him/her. ... I sent an e-mail message but s/he hasn't still replied." Some students stated that they had problems in communicating with the instructor; this was related to students themselves; but on the basis, this resulted from the fact that they could not use the system effectively. Because of some drawbacks like "How can ask to speak? How can I transfer my voice? etc. (...) (T1)

It was seen that the problems about using the system tools were more common related to this process in the interviews with the instructors.

The students might have problems in transferring the voice or sharing the screen in early courses (...) (I2).

Actually, the students had mainly two problems; one of them was about not knowing how to use the tools in the system (...). Firstly, they should have known how to use this system. In order to overcome this problem, I provided the opportunities with the students to experience. There were some guidelines for using these systems; but unfortunately, our students did not read these (I4).

The Problems Encountered in Online Examination Process. Online examination process is the process in which the evaluation takes on the Internet. This process requires to have some basic competencies like reaching the system with a username and a password and recording the responses for the questions in the examination. Within this framework, the problems students experienced are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
The problems student encountered in online examination process

Online examination process	Yes		Partly		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Did you know how to access the exam interface?	24	54.5	10	22.7	10	22.7
Did you know how to get the username and password which you were going to use in exam entrance screen?	27	61.4	14	31.8	3	6.8
Did you know how to save in order not to lose any information during the exam?	28	63.6	10	22.7	6	13.6
Did you know how to send the information after you completed the exam?	27	61.4	9	20.5	8	18.2

When the items related to the problems experienced in online examination process, it was seen that the students did not have too many problems. This might be resulted from the fact that the students attended a pilot test on the Internet before the online examination. The fact that they attended such kind of pilot test might have helped the students to gain experience against the possible problems in online examination process. The problems experienced in online examinations mentioned in the interviews with the technical support group members are presented in Table 6.

Table 6*Problems encountered in online examination process according to technical support group*

The problems encountered during the examination	f
Username and password problem	3
Not being able to control whether the exam responses were sent or not	2
Technical problems in examination process	2

When Table 6 was examined, it can be seen that the problem related to forgetting username/password occurred as the students did not log in to online examination interface frequently (f=3). Moreover, some problems related to recording the responses accurately or not appeared (f=2). Besides all these problems, the problems related to the some technical problems (power cut or internet outage) (f=2) during the online examination were taken under this category. Some statements taken from the interviews with the technical support group members are presented below.

(...) furthermore, some students had problems in online examinations because of the powercut or the internet outage and they could not go on since they had not saved their responses by then. Therefore, some problems occurred during the examinations. However, the problems related to the examinations usually occurred in the first examinations. I think, the number of problems decreased in time as the students gained experience (T2).

Some students tried to log in the examination interface just in examination time. In this situation, we might have some problems if the students had forgotten their usernames or passwords or if they had changed their passwords before. One of the most posed question during the examination period was whether the responses were recorded in the system or not. Although the students received an information message about the successfully completion of the process, they felt the need to call and ask. This appeared in the first examinations more frequently (T4).

It was mentioned that there were some problems about the use of online examination system in the interviews with the instructors. However, as the technical support group members were more active in this process, the instructors stated that they had only received problems related to the grades. Some statements taken from the interviews with the instructors are presented below.

(...) moreover, they might have some problems in the first online examinations (I2).

As the online examinations were organized centrally, I do not know the exact problems experienced in this process; but the students who could not complete the exam because of power cut or any other problems come to us. I think, this might be a problem in this process. Additionally, some students claimed that they did well in the examination; however, their responses were not recorded. In this kind of situations, we contact the technical support group members and check this (I3).

Recommended Solutions for the Problems

In this section, the recommended solutions for the problems mentioned in the interviews with the instructors and technical support group members are presented. The recommended solutions that the technical support group members suggested:

- An orientation on how to use the system should be given at the beginning. They might be informed about the use of system.
- Documents might be prepared on how to use the system effectively.
- The usernames and passwords might be delivered through SMS or sent personally to their e-mail addresses.

- The databases for the student information system and distance education center should be common and the former should be a system which includes the required information for the distance education center synchronously.

Most of the instructors thought that orientation training should be offered as the solution for the problems. When the sources of the institution and the number of students were taken into consideration, training on the Internet by means of a well-designed web interface would be more useful rather than face-to-face orientation training. Their views on how an effective training should be designed are presented below;

- Information on distance education should be provided.
- It should be explained how the courses would be taught in distance education.
- Information on the distance education units and the responsibilities of these units should be provided.
- The student affairs regulations of the institution should be presented.
- Information about the frequently asked questions should be given.
- Social networks should be suggested for communication among all registered students.
- More contact information (e-mail address, etc.) about the instructors should be placed on the website.

In the light of the findings of this study, a sample website was designed for the orientation training. The website, which was prepared based on the findings of the study and the recommendations of the instructors, was designed within the framework of the modules in Fig. 2.

General Information	People/Units in Charge	Online Course System	Online examinations	Regulations	Useful Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • its difference from the traditional education, the requirements of the system and the rights of the distance education student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsibilities of instructors • responsibilities of technical support group members • responsibilities of registrar's office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • logging in the online course • defined roles and duties • sound control • sound transfer • video transfer • screen sharing • permission to speak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examination system login page and interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the distance education and examination regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the university websites • library websites • registrar's office websites • contact

Fig. 2. Student Orientation Training Modules

General Information: In this section, general information on what distance education was, its difference from the traditional education, the individuals that could join, the requirements of the system and the rights of the distance education students.

People/Units in Charge: In this section, the pages related to the definitions of the people and units were available. The responsibilities of instructors, technical support group members and student affairs were presented in these pages. Thus, it was aimed at informing students upon whom they should reach when they experienced any problems.

Online Course System: In this section of the website, the students were informed about logging in the online course system, the defined roles and duties, sound control and transfer, video transfer, screen sharing and asking for permission to speak. The processes were described with videos, texts and visual flow charts. Utilizing various materials in this way, it was aimed at decreasing the problems of the students about these processes.

Online examinations: In this part, video, text and flow charts were prepared in order to remove the problems encountered during the online examination, which was one of the important components of distance education, and it was aimed at informing students about the process before the instruction. By means of the materials prepared in this manner, it was aimed at informing students about the examination system login page and interface.

Regulations: In the regulations section of the website, it was aimed at informing students about the distance education and examination regulations.

Useful Links: In useful links section, some links about the university, library and student affairs websites were shared. Through these sharings, students were expected to reach the related websites easily.

Besides information sharing on the website, an evaluation, which was parallel with the content of the orientation training, was designed in order to evaluate the students' achievement in orientation training. By means of this evaluation, the levels of students' completing orientation training were determined. The students with low level of achievement were asked to receive the training again and so that it was aimed at experiencing less problems in the process. The students with high level of achievement were allowed to move to the instructional process.

In the light of these recommendations, the snapshot of the prototype website for the orientation training that would be offered on the Internet within the body of distance education center was presented in Fig. 3.

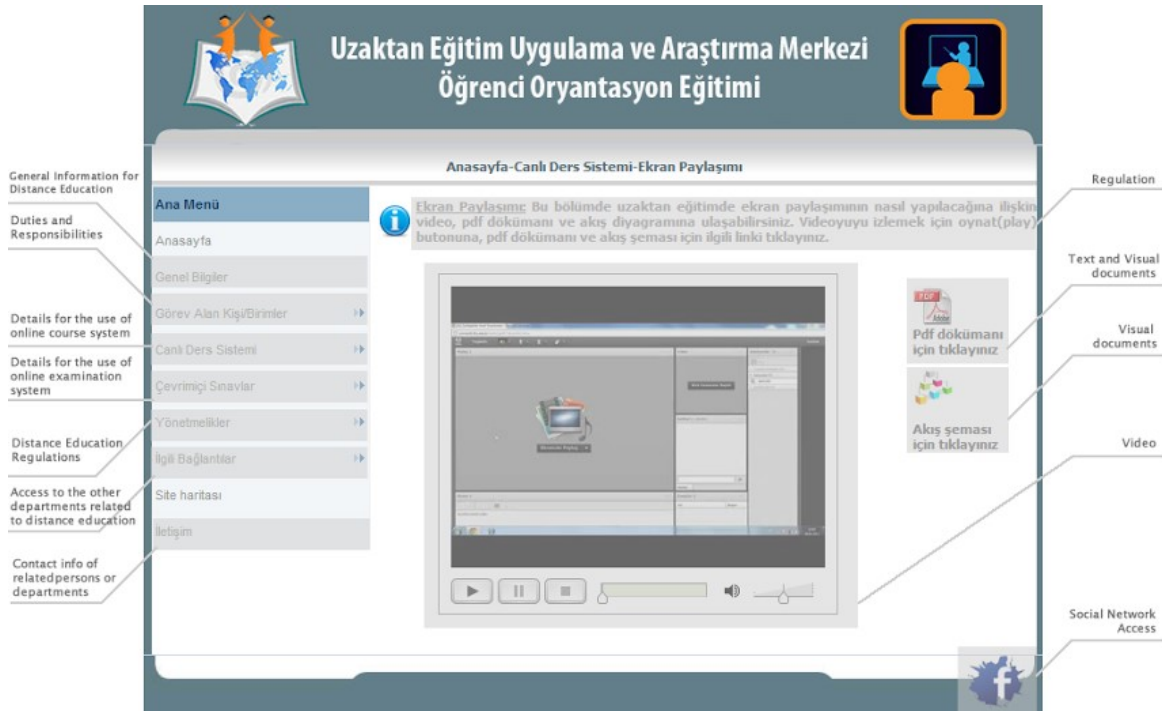


Fig. 3. Screenshot of the sample website design for the orientation training

Conclusions and Suggestions

In this study, it was aimed at determining the problems encountered in the orientation process in distance education and to provide solutions for these problems. At the end of the study, the problems students encountered in distance education process were grouped as during the registration process, the online course process and the online examination process.

The findings obtained from the surveys carried out with the students indicated that students had problems in accessing the course program, getting username and passwords in order enter the system, course procedures and reaching the people whom they could get information during the registration process. It was found that they had problems in terms of voice control, turn taking, voice transferring, video transferring, screen sharing and reaching people about the technical problems during the online course process. Similarly, in a study by Muilenburga and Bergea (2005), in which the problems students encountered in online learning processes were examined, it was stated that various factors affected this process and technical problems were one of these factors. Orientation training for these problems might be provided. Hence, in a study carried out by Mensch (2009), it was mentioned that the awareness of the students about the utilized technologies would increase by means of orientation training and the problems would decrease. Moreover, it was observed that a great number of students did not have problems when the items related to the online examination process were examined. This might be caused by the fact that distance education unit carried out some piloting test in order to ease the use of the system.

The findings obtained from the interviews with technical support group support the results of the survey. In addition to these problems, it was also found in the interviews with the technical support group that there were other problems such as students did not have enough knowledge or misinformation about what distance education was, they did not have enough knowledge about the required software and hardware and they did not know who was responsible for the problems they experienced.

The interviews with the course instructors indicated that the students had problems in terms of not knowing the procedures, having difficulties in using online course, having difficulties in online examinations and not knowing where to report the problems they encountered.

At the end of the interviews, it was seen that orientation training was important for the newly registered students. When the literature was reviewed, an online orientation training was recommended for the encountered problems (Ali & Leeds, 2009; Lee & Choi, 2011; Wojciechowski & Palmer, 2005). A program was developed by Cho (2012) for the online student orientation in higher education. This program, in modular structure, was considered useful for the students receiving online instruction.

When the problems were examined in this study, it was predicted that each problem could be taken as an instruction problem. As in Cho's (2012) study, it was thought that each instructional problem might be removed by means of an orientation training offered online. It was also thought that it would be more appropriate to offer the orientation training on the Internet as the number of students in distance education was high; and this would decrease the efficiency of the orientation training in face-to-face trainings and the cost of printed materials would be higher. Within the framework of the determined problems, a prototype web-based orientation training, which aimed at each problem, was designed using different multi media elements.

In further studies, online orientation training might be provided using the developed prototype and its effectiveness might be examined. A comparison between two groups receiving orientation and not receiving orientation might be made; and it might be measured whether there was a difference in terms of several variables, like achievement and satisfaction.

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