

# Professional Identity Development of Counselors-in-Training in a School Internship Program in Turkey



*The Professional Counselor*  
Volume 5, Issue 1, Pages 137–151  
<http://tpcjournal.nbcc.org>  
© 2015 NBCC, Inc. and Affiliates  
doi:10.15241/ma.5.1.137

Meral Atici

**The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions about a school counseling internship program at a university in Adana, Turkey by determining counseling interns' perspectives on the effects of the internship program and supervisors' perspectives on interns' professional development. Data were collected from nine school counseling supervisors, 11 school counseling interns, 11 guidance teachers and 34 students who attended group guidance activities during counseling students' internships. Data were analyzed using content analysis, and findings suggested that counseling interns have the opportunity to perform activities that school counselors normally perform, and that interns become competent in performing these activities. The internship program helped interns become competent at applying professional knowledge and skills. Additionally, with the assistance of interns, school counselors were able to provide proactive counseling services to students. The study suggests that positive, constructive feedback and advice from supervisors are essential for interns to be successful in completing internship activities in a positive and confident manner.**

**Keywords:** school counseling, school counseling internship, professional development, counselors-in-training, Turkey

Professional school counselor identity is defined as an integration of professional training with personal attributes in the context of the profession (Nugent & Jones, 2009). Brott and Myers (1999) stated that the development of professional school counselor identity can serve as a frame of reference for implementing work roles and making important decisions. Professional identity develops as part of the experiential maturation process over time, which begins in training and continues throughout a person's career. A school counselor's professional development starts during training, evolves during entry into the profession and continues to develop as the school counselor identifies with the profession (Brott & Myers, 1999).

Professional identity has internal as well as external aspects (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003). Internal aspects are defined as an individuation process derived from a cycle of dependence and autonomy as counselors-in-training (CITs) gain counseling skills (Brott & Myers, 1999). During training, students rely on guidance and support provided by supervisors as external authorities. Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) found that CITs needed external validation and assurance from experts, especially at the beginning of their training. Alternatively, counseling students felt much stronger, more confident and more positive toward counseling at the end of their internship and practice, with anxiety levels decreased and feelings of personal accomplishment increased (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Researchers in Turkey found that the sense of efficacy increased among counseling students who conducted group guidance activities (Atici, Özyürek & Çam, 2005), while their counseling skills evolved throughout the school counseling internship program (Atici & Ulusoy, 2010). Both an increase in positive feelings and a decrease in negative feelings were observed from the beginning to the end of the term (Atici et al., 2005; Atici & Ulusoy, 2010).

---

Meral Atici is an Associate Professor at Çukurova University. Correspondence can be addressed to Meral Atici, Çukurova University, Education Faculty, 01330, Balcalı, Adana, Turkey, [matici@cu.edu.tr](mailto:matici@cu.edu.tr)

The interpersonal aspect of professional identity development involves the role of the professional community in shaping the new professional (Auxier et al., 2003; Gibson et al., 2010). In the context of counseling, new professionals are socialized in the language of counseling, learn professional expectations, and learn to become a counselor through observation, supervision, consultation and practice (Gibson et al., 2010; O'Byrne & Rosenberg, 1998). This process also is conceptualized as entering a professional culture in which CITs learn appropriate attitudes, values, thinking styles and problem-solving strategies (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006).

It can be concluded that school counseling training programs can contribute to the professional development of CITs. For instance, in the United States, school CITs learn and apply the standards and models of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2003, 2005, 2012) and practice counseling activities under supervision via practicum and internship. School counseling interns at some universities in Turkey (e.g., Çukurova University) perform classroom guidance activities at primary and secondary schools, putting into practice what they have learned. In addition to classroom guidance, these students conduct activities such as small group guidance, individual counseling and consultation; apply individual assessment techniques and psychological measurement tools; and observe school counselor practices. Conducting these activities as CITs can result in a contribution to interns' professional development, in which being prepared as a school counselor and establishing confidence are preeminent. Other factors that contribute to students developing a sense of competency during their internship include observing school counselors' collaborative skills, engaging in the profession, perceiving their activities as successful and acknowledging their own professional development (Atici & Çam, 2013). Studer (2005) found that internship experience can provide opportunities for school counseling interns to engage in a number of activities concerning school counseling, while Nelson and Jackson (2003) indicated that internship experiences had positive effects on interns by giving them the opportunity to apply what they had learned and develop a sense of being a counselor. Similarly, Jett and Delgado-Romero (2009) found that prepracticum service learning and internship programs at schools and community agencies facilitated counseling students' professional development.

Henderson (1994) reported that supervision provided learning opportunities within a school context for counseling students. Furthermore, Sutton and Page (1994) suggested that supervision can function as a bridge between competencies in counselor education programs and the skills required in an actual work context. Receiving feedback from supervisors, along with having varied experiences during internship, appears to positively affect professional identity development. Findings from several studies have shown that support and assurance from university tutors and school counselors as supervisors also have a positive effect on professional identity (Nelson & Jackson, 2003); especially when school counseling students receive constructive, nourishing and encouraging feedback (Özyürek, 2009). Receiving feedback and advice from university professors, having a relaxed supervisory atmosphere in which counseling students can express themselves comfortably, and observing and modeling themselves after working school counselors all lead to improvement and motivation as a counselor (Atici & Çam, 2013).

However, Portman's study (2002) revealed that a group of CITs had not received supervision at their assigned schools, but had received clinical supervision from university supervisors during practicum and internship. Some student counselors found this supervision helpful, while others thought that they did not have a real supervisory experience. Accordingly, Özyürek (2009) found that supervisory courses and supervision were insufficient in school counseling internship programs.

Coker and Schrader (2004) developed a comprehensive, collaborative and integrative school-based practice in order to prepare students to better fulfill the demands of the school counselor's role and to help students learn to work at schools as leaders and advocates. In this school-based internship, in addition to individual and

group counseling, students consulted with teachers and parents, attended team meetings, and advocated for the personal, social and academic development of students. During internship at a primary school, students were able to perform the required number of hours for practicum, counsel real clients in an actual school context, and develop a clear counseling approach and orientation for working with young people at school under the guidance and supervision of researchers. They also experienced the various roles of a school counselor including advocate, consultant, collaborator and leader.

School counseling internship programs can facilitate the development of specific skills required for school counseling and general preparation for the profession. In addition, it can be concluded that during school counseling practice sessions, the support provided by the supervisor and role model at the school is influential in teaching school counselor roles and encouraging professional identity development.

Several studies have shown that counseling interns experience positive emotions such as confidence, success and efficaciousness by the end of the internship (Atici & Ulusoy, 2010; Nelson & Jackson, 2003), and their counseling skills and professional and personal development evolve (Atici & Çam, 2013; Atici et al., 2005; Atici & Ulusoy, 2010; Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009). Additionally, researchers have found that counseling interns have opportunities to experience several activities (Studer, 2005); to obtain their supervisor's help, support (Nelson & Jackson, 2003) and feedback (Atici & Çam, 2013); and to develop their own personal counseling approach (Coker & Schrader, 2004). However, since these studies focused on counseling interns or counseling students, there is a need to investigate the impressions of working school counselors (who also function as supervisors at school) about school counseling internship programs, as well as to explore counseling students' perspectives on the contributions of school counseling internship programs, supervisors and supervision to their professional development.

The present study focuses on school counseling supervisors' perspectives on school counseling internship programs, their assistance and contribution to school counseling interns, and their recommendations for solving problems and conducting internships more effectively, as well as on counseling students' opinions about the effects of their internship experiences and supervision on their professional development. The aims of this study were the following: (a) to identify school counseling supervisors' views on the effectiveness of school counseling internship programs, (b) to assess the assistance provided to school counseling interns, (c) to gather school counseling supervisors' recommendations for effective internship methods, (d) to investigate counseling students' perceptions about the effects of internship programs and the process of supervision on their own professional development, and (e) to examine the views of secondary school students and their teachers on the effectiveness of group guidance activities conducted by counseling interns.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants included nine professional school counseling site supervisors and 11 school counseling interns. A purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 1990) was used to collect data from information-rich cases. Specific school counseling supervisors were invited to participate in the study because they were identified as effective models for interns. Six female and three male counseling supervisors working in different schools voluntarily participated in the study. Five counselors had a master's degree in counseling, and the remainder held degrees at the undergraduate level. Of the professional participants, three worked at a high school, five worked at a middle school, and one worked at a primary school in Adana, Turkey. Their experience ranged from 9–22 years, while the number of years spent supervising counseling students ranged from 2–10 years. Eleven school counseling interns enrolled in school counseling internship courses at one university in Adana also participated in the study. These interns were selected because they provided written data from both the students who participated

in their group guidance activities in the schools and from these students' teachers regarding their views on the effects of group guidance activities. An agreement of consent regarding the purpose of the study, the research procedure and confidentiality was obtained from each of the participants. All participants voluntarily accepted participation in the study.

### **Description of Course Process**

Counseling students in this study each attended a course for school counseling internship, taking place at three schools and at one university in Adana, Turkey. They went to their respective schools for half a day each week during the autumn and spring terms in their fourth year of undergraduate study. During internship, counseling students conducted group and classroom guidance activities, consulted with teachers and parents, applied assessment techniques and measurement tools, interviewed individual students, and observed other school counselors working. One group guidance session was observed by a university supervisor and/or a professional school counselor site supervisor, who provided feedback about the intern's activity.

Supervision at the university was 3 hours per week; all students and the university supervisors attended this session. During this session, counseling students discussed their activities and difficulties, and received feedback from supervisors and other students in the group. At the end of the term, students submitted a portfolio of all of their activities during the internship, with a general evaluation of the supervisory course and supervision; the school, school personnel and school counselor; and the contribution of the supervisory course to their professional and personal development.

### **Data-Collecting Procedure**

Interviews and data from documents were used as qualitative data-collecting tools. The researcher interviewed nine school counseling supervisors individually using a semistructured interview guide. Open-ended questions were used to elicit supervisors' views on the effectiveness of the school counseling internship program, problems encountered during internship, their recommendations and the assistance they provided. Interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed.

Three different documents were used in this study. Counseling interns were asked to evaluate their school counseling internship programs, supervisors and supervision in terms of their professional development at the end of the term. Interns wrote about their internship programs and submitted these written texts to their supervisors as part of their final portfolio. High school students who attended group guidance activities and their teachers provided their ideas about the effects of group guidance activities on participating students' behavior by responding to an open-ended question. These written forms of data were collected from 11 counseling students, 11 teachers and 34 students who attended group activities conducted by six counseling students.

### **Analysis of Data**

The researcher analyzed qualitative data by using content analysis. To begin with, an open coding procedure was followed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Interview transcripts and written documents were examined by line, sentence and paragraph, and a code or a name representing a particular idea, activity or event was given. Then the researcher combined related codes into categories. For example, in coding data regarding influential factors in conducting group guidance activities, the codes of enthusiasm, not feeling anxious and feeling efficacious were grouped under the heading *emotional state*. Axial coding was carried out to identify main categories, their subcategories, and relationships between main and subcategories. For example, one of the categories that identified influential factors in conducting successful group guidance activities was titled *counseling student-related*. Emotional state and professional skills were placed under the counseling student-related category as subcategories. Finally, in the selective coding stage, the main categories and their subcategories were grouped together.

## Credibility and Trustworthiness

Activities performed to ensure validity included data and method triangulations by collecting in-depth data in face-to-face interviews with school counseling supervisors, and examining and analyzing documents produced by counseling interns, teachers and students who attended group guidance activities (Denzin, 1994). Next, the researcher presented direct quotations from counselors and examined research results in terms of meaningfulness and consistency, comparing his findings to those from different data sources in the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

The researcher kept a detailed explanation of the data collection and analysis procedure and raw data for reexamination by others. In order to enhance trustworthiness, the researcher attempted to acknowledge personal assumptions and prejudgments and prevent those biases from interfering with the data analysis and interpretation process (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Since a single researcher conducted the study, he tested for consistency (Robson, 1993) by comparing the codes derived from the initial coding process with those obtained from a second process. The researcher computed the proportion of agreement by dividing the number of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and number of disagreements, resulting in a consistency value of 0.84.

## Results

Results are presented in three categories as follows: (1) results derived from the analysis of interviews with school counselors, (2) counseling students' views on the roles of school counseling internship programs and supervisors impact on their professional development, and (3) school students and their teachers' views on the contributions of group guidance activities to participating students. Throughout the Results section, direct quotations from school counseling supervisors are labeled with a *C*, quotes from teachers are labeled with a *T* and quotes from counseling student interns are labeled with an *S*.

### Results from Interviews with School Counseling Supervisors

#### **School counseling supervisors' perspectives on counseling students' practices and effectiveness.**

According to the results of the interviews, the counseling students carried out group and classroom guidance activities during their school counseling internships. Counseling individuals, leading seminars with students and their parents, applying individual assessment techniques and measurement tools, and consulting with teachers and parents were among other activities. Examples of the supervisors' views on school counseling internship programs are presented below:

They did nine group guidance activities with their own group and three classroom guidance activities . . . [they also provided] consultation and applied an individual assessment technique. I encouraged them to interview students and their families. I have talked with them and asked what they think about the [client's] problem, which questions they can ask, and what they can do about the problem. (C8)

They did group guidance activities, . . . applied individual assessment techniques, evaluated the results, and consulted with teachers about the interpretation of the results. They did classroom guidance activities, for example conflict resolution, anger management, study skills, and career guidance, that must be carried out by school counselors. They also did individual interviews with students. (C9)

All of the supervisors surveyed acknowledged the positive work outcomes of the counseling interns. The school counselors emphasized the positive effects of the school counseling internship program by using terms like "significant contribution" and "very helpful." They also shared their impressions that the interns' work

was reflected in the behavior of students, parents and school personnel. They also witnessed the students' understanding of their activities, counseling concepts and topics, and expressed positive feelings regarding the interns.

Supervisors stated that the effects of the counseling internship program could be seen more specifically in personal and social areas such as self-awareness, self-acceptance, behavior change, interpersonal skills, awareness and control of emotions among school students. Additionally, school students improved in the areas of career decision and coping with career indecision during career counseling; and in areas of education such as study skills, exam anxiety and academic achievement. According to the supervisors, the counseling students benefitted from gaining experience in classroom management and individual counseling, improving communication skills, expressing themselves, and enhancing efficacy feelings. At the same time, the interns helped school counselors carry out their work plans and lessened their workload, providing counseling services to many more students and presenting proactive counseling services. Professional school counselors themselves benefitted from the internship experience by learning new ideas from the counseling students and enhancing their own motivation levels. For example, a counselor summarized the counseling students' motivating effect in the following quote: "They helped me renew myself. . . . [When counseling interns] came to my school, my enthusiasm and excitement increased. I learned new . . . warm-up activities when I observed them" (C3).

The following quote demonstrates how the counseling students' work was helpful for the supervisors, the school students and the counseling interns themselves: "They definitely made a contribution. I got positive feedback from teachers and students in terms of their contribution" (C6). Another school counselor made the following remarks:

They contributed a lot. . . . My interns were very active in working with me. In particular, some of them worked . . . as a second counselor in the school. They made . . . classroom presentations. They improved themselves, as well as benefit[ted] the students. . . . Their practices lessened my workload. (C2)

A third school counselor stated, "As I said before, I am trying to reach many students. . . . Interns contributed a lot. They also gained experience in classroom management, communication with students and getting feedback from students to increase their efficacy" (C4).

According to the school counseling supervisors, counseling interns learned the most during group work. Interns improved their overall effectiveness, which included emotional comfortableness, readiness, eager communication, leadership, group management and counseling skills. One school counselor explained, "Counseling students' skills of communication, group management and leadership greatly affected conducting successful activities" (C1). In the following quotes, two counselors explained how they used observation and feedback in the process of evaluating activities:

I go to a classroom guidance activity with [interns], especially when they have classroom management problems. They probably feel anxious during the first one or two activities, and then become relaxed. For this reason, after each activity we make an assessment for 5–10 minutes: How was the day? What did they do? What difficulties did they come across? They shared all sorts of things they would like to talk about. Furthermore . . . if there [is] something which I do not like, if they are reluctant to do activities or do something against school rules, I talk to them and express my concerns. (C2)

When they have difficulties I try to help them. Upon completion of their activities, we make a general evaluation of the day, focusing on topics like: How was the activity? What was the difficulty? What did they do to cope with it? (C5)

**School counselors' assistance to counseling interns.** Interview data regarding professional school counselors assisting counseling internship students revealed four themes: (a) observation, evaluation and feedback; (b) giving information and advice; (c) organizing counseling activities; and (d) being a model.

One counselor explained how she helped by observing group guidance activities and giving feedback and advice about reference books: "I prepared an observation form [for interns]. Then we sit and talk all together as a group. Thus, I create an atmosphere in which they benefit from each other. I advise them on books to be read and give information about the counseling approaches I prefer." (C3) Another counselor explained that she gave individual feedback after classroom guidance, as follows:

I observe [an intern] twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the term, while they are conducting a classroom guidance activity. I give feedback about their deficiencies as a school counselor and advice on how they can rectify these. . . . I find this way of giving feedback is positive and useful. (C4)

**Problems in internship programs and recommendations.** When school counseling supervisors were asked about problems they encountered during school counseling internship programs, four said there were no problems and they liked the way the internship program was carried out. On the other hand, five counselors mentioned a few problems related to counseling students, such as school student nonattendance, coming as a large group to internship sessions, being unmotivated toward the internship program and disobeying some rules. There also were a few problems arising from the school, school personnel and students, such as difficulty organizing groups of students; complications in scheduling appropriate days, times and places for classroom, group and individual work; school personnel's negative attitudes and behavior toward counseling interns; and students' reluctance to engage in group work.

One counselor expressed her ideas about the negative effects of nonattendance and the difficulty in observing counseling interns when they came in a large group to internship sessions in the following quote:

When a group of interns is too large, it is difficult for me to help them as I had planned. For example, they are not able to observe while I am interviewing students. Of course, I get permission from students for the presence of . . . counseling interns during interviews . . . it is a big problem for me when . . . interns do not come to counseling sessions on the assigned day. . . . All of the students in that group come to me one by one and ask whether . . . interns will come to the group activity, or why she/he is not coming. I am responsible to the principal, since the teacher leaves the class with me for a group guidance activity at a certain time. So, if the interns don't come, I have to do the activity by myself, meaning extra work for me. (C2)

The school counseling supervisors made recommendations for enhancing the quality of school counseling practices rather than solving problems. Although these recommendations were mainly for counseling interns and counseling activities, school personnel, students and university supervisors also were subjects of these recommendations. In particular, the school counselors suggested that certain activities should occur more frequently, such as consultations, seminars and classroom guidance sessions. Other suggestions for contributing to the school counseling internship programs were the following: learning legislative procedures and the tasks of the board of counselors at the school, keeping interview and council records, learning to solve specific problems like abuse and enuresis, presenting case studies about specific problems, observing school counselors' work, planning warm-up activities to precede group work, and not using old-fashioned individual assessment techniques which lead to labeling students.

In terms of duration and timing of the internship programs, suggestions were as follows: school counseling internship should start during the intern's second or third year of school, junior students should observe senior students during their internships at school, and time assigned for internship should increase. Regarding observation and evaluation, it was recommended that both site supervisors and university supervisors observe and evaluate counseling interns, and that school counselors meet at the university to revise the internship program from time to time. To this end, a school counselor expressed her ideas in the following quote:

There should be a meeting with school counselors, who accept counseling interns at their school, at the beginning and end of the year to talk about what they are going to do and to assess how the term went, what they did, was it useful? Coming together and making an overall assessment would be helpful once or twice a year. (C1)

Furthermore, another school counselor emphasized the necessity of adding consultations, seminars and case presentations to the practices currently being carried out, as follows:

I think the internship program should be revised in the light of a school counselor's actual duties at school. For example, seminars for parents and students, case examinations and presentations should be required from . . . interns. They should work on a specific case example and present this case study to the program supervisor. For instance, the interns may work with a student with exam anxiety and prepare a report on this case. They must work with specific problems that they will meet when they begin to work as a school counselor. There is a lack of practical experience in case work and consultation in the internship program currently operating. However, we do mostly consultation at school. (C2)

### **The Role of Supervisors and Internship in Interns' Professional Development**

**Interns' evaluation of university supervisors and supervision.** When counseling students' evaluations regarding supervision and supervisors at the university were analyzed, the following three categories emerged: contribution to the practice process, gaining experience and preparing for professional life, and feedback and advice. In the contribution to practice process, students pointed out that the supervisory course was productive and helpful. Counseling students learned a lot from the course that enabled them to create solutions to problems, recognize their mistakes, and share their activities and difficulties, thus making school counseling activities much more functional. Interns watched video recordings of group activities conducted by themselves or their peers in the supervisory course. The students stated that watching these recordings was beneficial, giving them a chance to see their mistakes, find solutions to problems and benefit from feedback. One counseling intern explained as follows:

Due to time limitations our supervisor could not come to observe our work at the school. But, by watching video recordings of the activities we did, and giving detailed feedback in supervisory sessions, our supervisor helped us to see our mistakes. I was lucky to be in her group. (S5)

According to the interns, school counseling internship programs contributed to their professional development and professional life by providing the opportunity to apply counseling knowledge and skills. These internship programs, which are considered indispensable for professional development, enabled counseling students to establish their own approaches and prepare themselves for future difficulties.

A main distinctive theme that emerged regarding university supervisors was the giving of feedback and advice. Feedback was considered helpful and efficient for solving problems that occurred during the program, selecting and organizing activities, conducting productive group activities, correcting mistakes, overcoming obstacles, coping with anxiety, and creating opportunities for self-evaluation. Advice provided by supervisors was seen as helpful enabling students to find solutions to problems and difficulties, to achieve desired results

from group activities, and to feel pleased with their progress. Counseling interns also received feedback and advice from their peers; one stated, “I think sharing our experiences, and giving and taking feedback from each other contributed to our development. The school counseling internship course was effective for gaining experience, getting practice and improving professionally.” (S1)

**Interns’ evaluation of school supervisors and supervision.** Two themes in this section were assistance to the practice process and negative impressions of supervisors at schools. Regarding assistance to the practice process, counseling interns explained that school counselors coordinated counseling practice for them by organizing groups of students and scheduling appropriate days, times and places for activities during the internship program. The supervisors also shared their experiences and knowledge, and provided opportunities for counseling students to observe some of their interviews with students and parents. The counselors demonstrated various methods of communicating with students, interviewing parents and other aspects of school counseling, and presented an example for which to learn the job. School counselors gave feedback and advice to assist counseling interns in learning how to be school counselors, provided professional information and prepared them for professional life (e.g., files, meetings, reports, minutes of meetings).

Regarding negative impressions, interns reported that some site supervisors, although relatively few in number, were reluctant to share their experiences or communicate with the interns because of time limits. For this reason, these supervisors did not organize individual counseling sessions or time for consultation, application and interpretation of measurement tools, and did not give any feedback. One counseling student said, “I think we did not get enough feedback from our site supervisors/school counselor due to their being busy. This was a negative aspect of our internship at school” (S9). Another intern said the following: I wish I had done more activities like individual counseling, learned more techniques and that the school counselor had shared her experiences more with us. Due to time limitations we didn’t have a chance to do some of the activities. (S1)

### **Roles of School Counseling Internship Programs in Interns’ Professional Development**

**Self-improvement in counseling skills.** School counseling internship programs enabled counseling students to build their skills and become productive in the areas of group guidance, classroom guidance, individual counseling, seminars and consultation. These activities were followed by improvements in counseling skills, application of theoretical knowledge, management of behavioral problems and group management skills.

Other contributions that counseling students mentioned included gaining professional knowledge, achieving milestones of the profession, preparing for the profession, discovering coherence between their personalities and the profession, and gaining insight into the ways that working with students of different ages and social backgrounds contributed to their professional development. The following quote may be taken as an example of counseling students’ ideas about the internship program:

It was full of experience and learning for me. Both the help of supervision and my own efforts have given me good preparation for my career. I believe that the things I learned this year will facilitate my future education and will be milestones in my professional career. (S7)

**Positive feelings during internship.** Being happy ( $n = 9$ ) was the most common positive feeling that counseling students experienced during internship. It was followed, in order, by feeling efficacious ( $n = 6$ ), confident ( $n = 5$ ), eager ( $n = 5$ ), proud ( $n = 2$ ), and relaxed and good ( $n = 1$ ), both personally and professionally. Interns used words such as “like” and “enjoy” to describe their experience. Counseling students expressed that they were happy when they were successful and helped students, received supervisors’ support and feedback, and worked with certain supervisors at the university. They also emphasized that their efficacy and

confidence had increased as they did successful work, attended supervision sessions and received feedback from supervisors. Similarly, with the support of the supervisors, they became eager about counseling activities and exercises, taking pride in positive feedback, enjoying the profession through their internship experiences and showing positive emotions such as feeling relaxed. One student expressed the positive effects of feedback as follows: “Having constructive feedback and advice, and our supervisor giving importance to everybody’s work, made me feel happy. Due to her feedback, I felt little anxiety while I was doing activities. This course enhanced my confidence in doing school counseling work.” (S5)

### **Teachers’ and Students’ Views on Group Guidance Activities**

**Students’ gains from activities.** Ninth graders attended group guidance activities on communication, assertiveness, social skills and career counseling, and produced written documents acknowledging what they had gained from the activities. When the documents were analyzed, it was clear that students had positive results and acquisitions such as self-awareness, getting to know people, introducing themselves to others and skills of communication, assertiveness and relationships. Students also expressed positive feelings and comments regarding group activities, such as happy, relaxed, enjoyable, peaceful, eager and responsible. Students who attended career counseling group activities reported that at the end of these activities, they had learned about several occupations; identified majors and occupations they would choose in the future; recognized their abilities and interests; understood relationships and consistencies between occupation and ability, occupation and interest, and occupation and personality; and acknowledged factors that affect pursuing a career.

Data suggested that students had positive views of the counseling interns. In order, these positive adjectives were as follows: understanding, being good, good listener, respectful, gentle, being confidential, sympathetic, patient, reliable, optimistic and cheerful. Furthermore, the students also thought that the counseling interns produced solutions to problems. However, in contrast to these positive features, school students also mentioned a few negative aspects of the activities, like hesitating to tell their secrets to the group, not understanding how to fill in forms or finding solutions offered to the group as useless.

**Teachers’ ideas about classroom guidance activities.** When teachers’ views about the effects of these activities with students were analyzed, three themes emerged as follows: interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and behavioral and motional changes. Teachers pointed out that they observed development mostly in interpersonal relationships and communication skills such as active listening, being respectful and getting to know each other, enhancing group transactions, attachment and cooperation, and sharing. The teachers also brought attention to behavioral development and changes in problem-solving skills, participation in lessons, assertiveness and protection of their rights, taking responsibility, and correcting mistaken goals. According to teachers, students showed positive emotional changes, meaning that they enjoyed, were enthusiastic about and were satisfied with the activities, which enhanced self-confidence and motivation toward their lessons. Two teachers expressed the positive effects of the activities in the following quotes:

Some of my students in particular began to come to school with positive feelings such as happy, eager and ready. Others of my students who have had problems in expressing themselves and participating in the lessons started to cope with shyness/timid[ity] and participated in the lessons with confidence. (T1)

There are positive changes in students’ behavior like problem solving and communicating with their peers. They used to fight to solve their problems, but now they have learned to stop, wait and listen to each other to work things out. I assume that group guidance activities are very useful in teaching students how to work out their problems. (T2)

## Discussion

According to findings derived from interviews with counseling supervisors, counseling interns gained experience in classroom guidance, group guidance, individual counseling, seminars, consultation, and application of individual assessment and measurement techniques during school counseling practices. It can be said that these are the essential parts of a school counselor's work, and having had these experiences, interns are more likely to be prepared for the school counselor role. Similarly, interns' evaluations of the supervisory course in the internship program showed that through the program, counseling students both developed and enhanced their counseling skills through conducting school counseling-related activities. Coker and Schrader (2004) also found that in school-based practice, counseling interns did individual and group counseling and consultations, attended team meetings, and advocated for the personal, social and academic achievement of students. The findings of the present study parallel those of Brott and Myers (1999), who concluded that professional identity development begins in training and continues throughout a person's career life. Additionally, the current results are considered consistent with Studer's (2005) findings, that internship provides opportunities to do school counseling activities; with Nelson and Jackson's (2003) findings, indicating that internship has positive effects on application of knowledge, skills and development of insight; and Jett and Delgado-Romero's (2009) study, showing that doing internship at a school or hospital facilitates counseling students' professional development.

All school counseling supervisors in the present study noticed the positive outcomes of the school counseling internship programs, for the school students who attended the counseling activities, for the interns and for the school counseling supervisors themselves. These school counselors witnessed school students' cognitive, emotional and behavioral changes as a result of attending counseling activities, and received positive feedback from teachers and parents regarding counseling interns' work. School counseling supervisors' impressions and observations regarding the benefits of counseling practices, in terms of personal-social, educational and career development of students, were consistent with teachers and students' evaluations of the effects of the activities. For example, classroom guidance teachers pointed out that they observed changes in students who attended group guidance activities with regard to interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and emotional and behavioral changes. Furthermore, students who attended these activities also said that they acquired skills in the areas of communicating, building relationships, practicing assertiveness, and making decisions about majors and careers, and that they gained positive feelings toward the activities. It should be emphasized that there were similarities in students' and teachers' perceptions about the effects of counseling practices. These similarities were especially apparent in personal-social changes and positive emotions regarding activities. School counselors emphasized that counseling students assisted them in carrying out their work plans and lessening their workloads; thus, they were able to provide preventative counseling services to many more students.

According to school counseling supervisors surveyed, counseling students benefitted from counseling internship by gaining experience in classroom management and individual counseling, improving communication skills, and enhancing self-efficacy. Similarly, counseling students mentioned their acquisitions in the application and development of school counseling knowledge and skills, feeling happy and efficacious as a result of the successful internship activities they completed. These findings parallel the findings of studies carried out by Atici et al. (2005), Atici and Ulusoy (2010), and Atici and Çam (2013).

The professional school counselors indicated that they were able to help counseling interns by observing them and giving feedback, providing information and advice, organizing counseling practice sessions, and being role models. The counseling interns mentioned the same kinds of help provided by their school counseling supervisors. These results parallel the findings of Atici and Çam's (2013) study, which indicated that school counselors help counseling interns by coordinating school counseling practice sessions, being role models, and sharing materials and resources. Coker and Schrader's (2004) findings indicated that counseling interns develop

a clear counseling approach with the guidance of supervisors, and are able to experience the school counselors' roles of collaboration, advocacy, leadership and consulting with the guidance of professional school counselors.

A few counseling interns in the current study had negative impressions of school counseling supervisors who were reluctant to share their experiences, organize practice sessions and give feedback. As a result, counseling students could not benefit from the experiences and skills of some school counselors. This finding is supported by the results of a study by Atici and Çam (2013). Similarly, some CITs in Portman's (2002) study did not receive supervision at schools, and although they found that clinical supervision from the university supervisors was useful, there were deficits in the internship program, and they did not receive a real supervised experience. According to these results, it can be concluded that school counselors' inability to create an environment in which they function as role models and provide feedback may affect the professional identity development of some counseling interns in a negative way.

According to school counselors surveyed in the present study, counseling interns' readiness, desire, comfort, self-efficacy, communication, leadership, group management and professional skills played roles in the effectiveness of group activities. This finding is consistent with the opinions of counseling interns regarding the contributions of the school counseling internship program to their professional development. Counseling interns reported that as a result of successful work they did, and during successful work, they felt happy, relaxed, eager and efficacious; thus, they acknowledged self-development in conducting group guidance activities and building counseling skills and group management skills. These findings parallel results from other studies, such as that CITs experience positive feelings like confidence, achievement and efficacy (Atici & Ulusoy, 2010; Nelson & Jackson, 2003) and develop their counseling skills, and that school counseling activities contribute to professional and personal development (Atici & Çam, 2013; Atici et al., 2005; Atici & Ulusoy, 2010; Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009) and provide opportunities to do various activities (Studer, 2005).

It is clear that feedback and advice from university supervisors were useful and effective in planning and carrying out successful activities, finding solutions to problems and assessing of activities. Watching video recordings of sessions enabled students to receive feedback from professional school counseling supervisors and their peers, which was very helpful and improved the conducting of group guidance activities. Similarly, in interviews, school counseling supervisors pointed out that their feedback for counseling students impacted the success of group activities. Counseling interns also reported that their feelings of happiness, pride, efficacy, confidence and love for the profession increased as they did successful work and received feedback from supervisors. These findings shared similarities with results in the literature, indicating that assurance and support from university supervisors and site supervisors in schools positively affect professional identity (Nelson & Jackson, 2003), that counseling students find feedback constructive, encouraging and helpful for improving their professional development (Özyürek, 2009). The literature also shows that nurturing feedback and advice from university supervisors and a relaxed supervision atmosphere have motivating effects (Atici & Çam, 2013), and supervision functions as a bridge between competencies in the counselor education program and the skills required in workplaces (Sutton & Page, 1994).

School counseling supervisors reported that they met few problems during internship, and they solved these problems by talking with counseling students and expressing their expectations. The fact that school counselors encountered few problems emphasizes that they liked and were satisfied with the internship program, although they made recommendations in order to further develop the internship programs and counseling exercises. These recommendations were mainly to increase some activities and to start school counseling internship programs earlier than the last or fourth year of study.

## **Study Implications**

From the results of the study, it is apparent that school counseling internship programs not only contribute to the professional development of counseling students, but also help professional school counselors and school students in several aspects. As a result, school counseling coordinators and school principals should organize school counseling internship programs, so as to benefit from counseling interns' assistance in providing counseling services to as many students as possible.

Since feedback and advice given by university supervisors were considered useful and effective in planning and carrying out successful activities, university supervisors should provide feedback by either observing counseling students or monitoring their activity records from the internship program. This feedback is vital for counseling interns, especially when they need to see and correct their mistakes and assess their professional skills with the guidance of an external authority.

Although there were only a few complaints about school counseling supervisors' reluctance to assist counseling students during internship, their disinclination is still an obstacle to the professional development of counseling students. Therefore, the university counseling educators should consider this issue when deciding to which school and school counselors they will send their counseling interns, and they should discuss this potential problem with the school counselors and express their expectations and concerns. In light of school counselors' recommendations for enhancing activities to better prepare counseling students for the duties and roles of future school counselors and to contribute to professional identity development, revising school counseling internship programs should be considered.

## **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Interviews with professional counselors and document data from counseling internship students, classroom guidance teachers and school students who attended group activities were used in this study. Although the triangulation method was used, collection of data from multiple participants was limited since this study was conducted by only one researcher. In the future, if more than one researcher were involved in a study, it would be possible to collect data from a greater number of school counselors, counseling interns, school students participating in group or classroom guidance activities, and teachers at schools. There also was the limitation of not involving a university supervisor in the study. If this level of university supervisor could be involved in a similar study, it would be possible to explore the issue from the different perspectives of relevant parties. Similar studies might be conducted by including counselor education programs from several different universities.

## **Conclusion**

This study showed that school counseling internship programs provide opportunities for counseling students to experience many school counselor activities and to become competent in carrying out these activities. It is clear that school counseling internship programs and activities give counseling students a chance to apply counseling skills, make contributions to students attending counseling activities, lessen the workloads of school counselors, provide proactive counseling services to many more students and contribute to their own professional development. Furthermore, once again it is evident that positive and constructive feedback and advice, along with help from university supervisors and site supervisors, were fundamental for counseling interns in conducting activities, feeling positive emotions and establishing confidence.

**Conflict of Interest and Funding Disclosure**

The author reported no conflict of interest or funding contributions for the development of this manuscript.

**References**

- American School Counselor Association. (2003). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American School Counselor Association. (2005). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- American School Counselor Association. (2012). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Atici, M., & Çam, S. (2013). Okullarda PDR uygulamaları dersine ilişkin öğrenci görüşlerinin incelenmesi [Students' views on the course of counseling and guidance practice at schools]. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 39, 106–119.
- Atici, M., Özyürek, R., & Çam, S. (2005). Okul danışmanlığı uygulamalarının yetkinlik beklentisi algılarının ve mesleki benlik saygısı üzerindeki etkilerinin boylamsal olarak incelenmesi [The effects of school counseling practices on counselor self-efficacy and occupational self-esteem: A longitudinal study]. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 24(3), 7–26.
- Atici, M., & Ulusoy, Y. (2010). Psikolojik danışman adaylarının grup rehberliği etkinliğini yürütürken kullandıkları psikolojik danışma becerilerinin, bu becerileri kullanmaya ilişkin yeterlik algılarının ve grup yönetimini sağlama yöntemlerinin incelenmesi [Group counselor effectiveness of counseling skills and self-efficacy providing the group management method]. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 19, 62–81.
- Auxier, C. R., Hughes, F. R., & Kline, W. B. (2003). Identity development in counselors-in-training. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 43, 25–38. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2003.tb01827.x
- Brott, P. E., & Myers, J. E. (1999). Development of professional school counselor identity: A grounded theory. *Professional School Counseling*, 2, 339–348.
- Coker, K., & Schrader, S. (2004). Conducting a school-based practicum: A collaborative model. *Professional School Counseling*, 7, 263–267.
- Denzin, N. K. (1994). Triangulation in educational research. In T. Husen, & T. N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education* (2nd ed., pp. 6461–6465). Oxford, England: Pergamon.
- Dollarhide, C. T., & Miller, G. M. (2006). Supervision for preparation and practice of school counselors: Pathways to excellence. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 45, 242–252. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2006.tb00001.x
- Gibson, D. M., Dollarhide, C. T., & Moss, J. M. (2010). Professional identity development: A grounded theory of transformational tasks of new counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 50, 21–38. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2010.tb00106.x
- Henderson, P. (1994). *Supervision of school counselors*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED372353)
- Jett, S. T., & Delgado-Romero, E. A. (2009). Prepracticum service-learning in counselor education: A qualitative case study. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 49, 106–121. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2009.tb00091.x
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nelson, K. W., & Jackson, S. A. (2003). Professional counselor identity development: A qualitative study of Hispanic student interns. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 43, 2–14. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2003.tb01825.x
- Nugent, F. A., & Jones, K. D. (2009). *Introduction to the profession of counseling* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- O'Byrne, K., & Rosenberg, J. I. (1998). The practice of supervision: A sociocultural perspective. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 38, 34–42. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.1998.tb00555.x
- Özyürek, R. (2009). Okullarda psikolojik danışma uygulamaları ve öğrencilere sağlanan süpervizyon olanakları: Ulusal

- bir tarama çalışması [The supervision opportunities for practicum students of school counseling provided to trainees in Turkish universities: A national survey]. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 32, 5463.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Portman, T. A. A. (2002). "The opportunity was there!": A qualitative study of early-entrant school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 6, 61–70.
- Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and technique*. London, England: Sage.
- Studer, J. R. (2005). Supervising school counselors-in-training: A guide for field supervisors. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, 353–359.
- Sutton, J. M., & Page, B. J. (1994). Post-degree clinical supervision of school counselors. *The School Counselor*, 42, 32–39.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2008). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri* [Qualitative research methods in social sciences]. Ankara, Turkey: Seçkin Yayınevi.