

The Development of Counselor Education in Turkey: Current Status and Future Challenges

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This article aims to describe the development of counselor education in Turkey, especially in the following areas: (1) the brief history of counseling in Turkey; (2) the preparation and training of counselors; (3) the current status of counselor education; (4) the major issues now facing Turkish counselors; and (5) the future challenges of counselor education in Turkey and its trends of development.

Turkey lies to the west of the region once known as Mesopotamia, the “Cradle of Civilization.” As a consequence, a number of civilizations played roles in Turkey’s long and rich history. Turkey is a country of over 67.3 million people (T.C. Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2002b). Situated in both Europe and Asia and controlling the major waterway between the Black Sea and the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, the country has long been a crossroads between east and west, north and south. Being a developing country, Turkey is subject to the usual problems of industrialization and urbanization, including a significant increase in the breakdown of family networks, and the modification of traditional cultural patterns (McWhirter, 1983).

The aim of this article is to present a general frame about: (1) the short history of counselor education and its current status in Turkey; (2) the teaching staff, the selection of students, and the emphases of counselor

education programs; and (3) its future challenges and trends of development.

Brief History of Counseling in Turkey

The history of counseling in Turkey is closely related to the history of educational practice and problems in schools. As each country has its own historical background, political system, and economic conditions, any counseling model that is being appropriated from one society into another will naturally be affected by these factors (Duan & Wang, 2000; Lau, 2000; Leung, 1999a, 1999b; Shek, 1999).

As in the United States and most other countries, counseling in Turkey began in schools (Kepceoglu, 1986). Turkey has been making efforts to develop a system of counseling in schools for about fifty years. The first counselors were primarily teachers, and counseling was a function they performed in addition to their teaching responsibilities (Dogan, 2000). Their major duties included career and educational counseling. The major factors that have influenced the emergence of counseling in Turkey are depicted as follows:

1. Social changes, such as modernization, technological development, democratization (Berkes, 2003), and changing family patterns, have created the need and the desire for counseling in education (Ener, 1979; McWhirter, 1983).
2. Counseling has been viewed as an effective means for developing human potential (Kepceoglu, 1994).
3. The individual differences of students have contributed to the emergence of counseling in schools.
4. The fact that elementary and secondary schools emphasized career counseling has also contributed to the emergence of counseling in schools.

The psychological counseling services in Turkey have started to develop as a result of the above factors. The first center for Psychological Services was established in Ankara in 1955. It was later transformed into a Guidance and Research Center and the experience was exported to other provinces of Turkey (Oner, 1977). Afterwards, counseling services in schools were established in 1970–1971. The services aim to provide ongoing help to students, teachers, administrators, staff and parents. The Ministry of National Education (MNE) implemented some essential policies and then employed 90 counselors to start services for 24 selected secondary schools in 1970–1971 (Kepceoglu, 1986). During this course, counselor education was put on the agenda.

Preparation of Counselors in Turkey

In Turkey, MNE started to send graduate students to the United States for learning counseling and guidance in late 1940s. However, few of them returned home after obtaining doctoral degree in counseling. In 1951–1952, Gazi Teachers Training College (later renamed as Gazi College of Education) first started to include courses of “Guidance and Guidance Techniques” in its curriculum. Some articles, booklets, and books originally used in the United States were also translated into Turkish (Ozguven, 1990).

In 1965, Ankara University set up the Educational Psychology and Guidance Department as an undergraduate program within the College of Education (Kuzgun, 1993). Hacettepe University introduced its counseling major to the master of education program in 1967. Ankara University, Middle East Technical University, and Bosphorus University then set up graduate programs in counseling (Ozguven, 1990). These programs were adapted from the counselor education models of the United States, such as Roger’s “person-centered approach” (Dogan, 2000).

During 1982–1995, the number of four-year undergraduate counselor education programs increased rapidly. In 1982, Hacettepe University established the first undergraduate program in counseling. Afterwards six other universities admitted students to their four-year bachelor of education program with a major in guidance and counseling. The number of related master's and doctoral degree programs also increased. As in the United States, counseling is flourishing in Turkey in colleges of education rather than in departments of psychology (Whiteley, 1984).

Current Status of Counselor Education Programs

All preparation programs of counselor education in Turkey are offered at the undergraduate or graduate level. Eighteen universities are engaged in training and preparing counselors. Some of the graduate programs lead to a master's degree and doctoral degree in counseling psychology and guidance. The master's and doctoral degree programs may require the preparation of thesis, and emphasize research and theoretical components.

All counselor-training programs are offered by the departments of counseling psychology and guidance in the colleges of education. All of these programs train counselors. However, in Turkey each university has its own program, therefore there is great disparity in both the classes offered and the content of the courses from one university to another (Akkoyun, 1995). Moreover, individual department may have different emphasis on theory or practical preparation according to its philosophy and its perception of the counseling profession. Nevertheless, these programs are approved by the Council of Higher Education (CHE).

On the other hand, MNE arranges some in-service counseling training programs from time to time. But the qualification is not approved by the Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association, nor by counselors graduated from university's counselor education programs.

The Faculty

Faculty members are appointed according to the needs of the college of education, following the recommendation of the counseling psychology and guidance department. Some of the faculty received their graduate education in the United States, and a few of them from other Western countries. At present, the number of these professionals who received their graduate education in Turkey has increased steadily since 1982. There is still heavy reliance on American resources in general. Many textbooks and periodicals that are used by the counseling psychology and guidance departments of universities in Turkey were acquired through the professional organizations of counselors.

In the eighteen universities in Turkey running undergraduate and graduate programs on counseling psychology and guidance, there are 28 full professors, 24 associate professors, 48 assistant professors, 15 instructors with PhD, 19 instructors, 12 specialists, and 73 teaching assistants in the related field. Of this staff, 113 are females whereas 106 are males. The population of teaching staff in these universities varies from 6 to 32. The total number of professors at each department (full, associate, and assistant) is between 2 and 10. Nearly 70% of the teaching staff have had their doctorates in the field of counseling psychology (Dogan & Erkan, 2001).

The faculty members of counseling departments in Turkey's universities are members of the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association, which was founded in 1989 by a group of counselor educators at Hacettepe University in Ankara. Currently it has almost 1,000 members who are mainly counselors and counselor educators (Psikolojik Danisma ve Rehberlik Dernegi, 2003a).

The association began to publish the well-respected *Turkish Journal*

of Psychological Counseling and Guidance in 1990 and the newsletter *Psychological Counseling and Guidance Bulletin* in 1997 (Psikolojik Danisma ve Rehberlik Dernegi, 2003b).

Students

In Turkey, counseling departments do not select their students at the undergraduate level. Rather, students are selected through a general Examination for Student Selection (Ogrenci Secme Sinavi) held by the subdivision of CHE. Therefore, there is a standardized selection criterion for selecting students in counselor education programs.

However, at the graduate level, students are selected according to criteria of individual universities. The criteria may be different in terms of personal characteristics, but not academic attributes. The following are the common criteria adopted by all universities:

1. Candidates meet a minimum score of 65% in their individual total average score at the undergraduate level.
2. Students have to take the LES examination (Graduate Education Proficiency Examination) and obtain satisfactory scores.
3. Proficiency in a foreign language, especially English, may be an advantage.
4. Personal interview is required.

The number of undergraduate students in counseling psychology and guidance programs of each university in Turkey ranges from 42 to 300, whereas that of master's students ranges from 3 to 52 and that of doctoral students from 2 to 32.

The faculty-student ratio of undergraduate programs in counseling psychology and guidance varies from 1:11 to 1:68. The same ratio at the graduate level varies from 1:1 to 1:31, and its average ratio is 1:4 (Dogan & Erkan, 2001).

Program Emphasis

As said before, the nature of counselor training in Turkey is somewhat influenced by the American model of counselor education and adapts the Roger's "person-centered approach." As pioneer counselors completed their training from overseas, mainly the United States, the person-centered approach became well-established among professional counselors, both in individual counseling and group counseling. However, the socio-cultural theories of helping have not been given adequate importance in counselor-training programs at the universities in Turkey.

Age Emphasis

All counseling programs and courses provided by faculty members in counseling emphasize working with clients aged 6 through 18. The acceptable age brackets are: (1) elementary school children (Grades 1–8), aged 7–15; (2) secondary school adolescents (Grades 9–12), aged 15–18.

Theoretical Emphasis

In Turkey, theoretical courses taught in the counseling psychology and guidance departments provide counseling trainees with the opportunity to be exposed to different theories and approaches in counseling and psychotherapy. These courses also include theoretical perspectives in education, psychology, sociology, and philosophy, at both the introductory and advanced levels. This part of the training is achieved by lectures together with reading assignments. These courses are assessed by an examination or a term paper, or both, as well as by a research study. For the research study, trainees are required to take at least one course in research design.

There has also been an increasing emphasis on counseling skills based on the work of practitioners. This approach tends to draw on the best

traditions of the person-centered and cognitive approaches, and was developed alongside the notion of levels of work in school counseling. It promotes the idea that all teachers should have first-level counseling skills; that is, they should be able to listen to pupils, and to react and respond to the emotional problems of pupils. There has also been a focus on pupil-teacher relationships and the promotion of good relationships. For this reason, undergraduate students in the college of education have to take the course “Guidance” to be eligible for a teacher. The “Guidance” course is also an elective course in the teaching knowledge certification program. Students will learn the basic skills and knowledge about counseling in this course. The second level of counseling skills involves the school’s ability to provide continuous care. It focuses on early detection systems, provision of coordinated approaches, and links with other agencies. The third level is seen as a more specialist activity where a teacher or counselor works with a group or an individual in greater depth. This is called consultation, a kind of counselor intervention. In the intervention, counselor and teacher share ideas about students, their problems, and the related therapeutic objectives.

At the graduate level, more emphasis is put on research for students who plan to finish their master’s or doctoral degree with a thesis.

Educational and Career Counseling

The faculty members of counseling departments in Turkey’s universities put their emphasis on educational and career counseling because counselors are mainly involved in these kinds of counseling. In elementary schools, especially during the first years (Grades 1–5), educational counseling have got much importance than career counseling, with the focus on individual counseling, small group counseling, large group counseling, consultation and coordination. Because there is not a specific time to hold counseling activities in elementary schools, most of

these activities are conducted by guidance teachers during classes. In the subsequent years of elementary schools (Grades 6–8), the importance of career counseling increases.

In secondary schools, both career counseling and educational counseling have the same importance. Counselors administer different tests (interest, aptitude, and values tests) to students and provide them with information about jobs, occupations, and the training needed at different grade levels. They are involved in transitional and referral activities and services.

MNE tends to give more attention to vocational guidance. However, as Turkey is a developing country, employment choices in professional sectors are limited by such factors as inadequate financial support for the preferred type of university education, difficulties in finding a job of a graduate student from any field of study due to the lack of matching services, and so on. These are the obstacles to the development of vocational guidance studies.

Practicum Emphasis

The ratio between practice and theory is 3:7 in the programs of counseling psychology and guidance in Turkish universities (Ankara Üniversitesi, 2004; Ege Üniversitesi, 2004; Gazi Üniversitesi, 2004; Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2004). At the end of the fourth school year, all undergraduate students practice in elementary or secondary schools or in other educational settings. During practicum, counselor students hold individual and group interviews and apply some instruments to the client. Later they share their experiences with other students.

It is not uncommon to find differences in courses offered and their emphases among universities. Flexibility and academic freedom are the core elements for all universities in Turkey.

The Kind of Counseling Skills Provided

Heavy emphasis is given to individual counseling and helping skills in all training programs in Turkey. However, group counseling skills are increasingly important because of the tendency of society to require counselors to work more in classroom setting. Principals and teachers alike have encouraged this tendency. The rationale behind is to enable counselors to work with more students and deal with their different problems at the same time (Gazi Üniversitesi, 2004).

Current Problems

In Turkey, most of the counselors are employed by MNE. These counselors are working in MNE's Guidance and Research Center or in other educational institutions. The Guidance and Research Center aims at "running guidance and psychological counseling services effectively and productively in schools, diagnosing individuals who need special education in the cities, and running guidance and psychological counseling for these individuals" (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, 2001). However, the number of these government counselors is not supposed to be enough (Dogan, 2000). For example, in the 127 offices of the Guidance and Research Center, only 932 counselors were employed in the 2001–2002 academic years (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2003).

The number of counselors in schools has increased rapidly from 90 teacher-counselors in 1971 to 7,115 in 2003. Of these, 6,625 counselors are employed by the government (93%) and 490 are private counselors (7%). These counselors provide counseling and guidance services in the following settings: (1) 53% in elementary schools (Grades 1–8); (2) 39% in secondary schools (Grades 9–12); (3) 1% in special education setting; and (4) 7% in private (elementary and secondary) schools (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2003). Counselors in Turkey are assigned 30 hours' counseling and guidance services a week. Besides the importance of

psychological counseling in primary and secondary schools, it has also gained importance in Turkish universities (Yeşilyaprak, 1993). Like some Asian students do, Turkish university students also perceive psychological counseling as having both the educational, preventive, and therapeutic functions (Leung, Guo, & Lam 2000; Lin, 2001).

Although the number of undergraduate and graduate counselor education programs and that of counselors have been increasing since 1982 (Öğrenci Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi, 2003), there exist some limitations of counselor education in Turkey. These limitations will be depicted in the following sections.

Deficiencies of Counselor Education Programs

The first deficiency of counselor education programs is related to the theories taught in the programs. In Turkey, counselor education is still very limited in content according to the standard of the United States. Also, the counseling profession has not been fully successful because theories have not been put into practice effectively in spite of persistent efforts of practitioners. Counselor education in Turkey has been very much influenced by the developments of counseling in the United States. The major models and theories adopted have been developed in the mainstream society for the white middle/upper classes in a different context and therefore are culture-bound. As Skovholt (1988) contended, both Rogerian ideas and standardized test procedures have been imported from the United States in a way that is not completely positive. It is important to note that even in the United States, the application of traditional counseling models to people whose cultural background is different from that of the white middle/upper classes are questioned. With the increased migration of people globally, it is important that the skills and techniques of counseling should be modified appropriately to work for people of different cultural origins.

Different countries, whether developed and underdeveloped, are now adapting counseling, originally an American phenomenon, to assist people to cope with problems brought about by social and economic changes in the modern world where we live (Bojuwoye, 1992; Duan & Wang, 2000; Lau, 2000; Leung, 1999a; Williams, 2003).

Asian cultures are different from American culture: The latter values individualism whereas the former stresses collectivism. “Culture” could be defined as the collection of commonly shared values, beliefs, behaviors, customs, and other characteristics that identify certain people as an original and distinct group. Asian countries share some common religious beliefs, such as Confucianism (Miller, Yang, & Chen, 1997) for the Chinese or Islam for Turks; their modernization processes are similar (agriculture → industry → modernization); they also have strong family relations. These are the significant determinatives of Asian cultures. It is expected that cultural differences affect counselor education programs. When understanding Turkish culture, it is helpful to interpret actions or behaviors based on certain values of the culture. Table 1 compares some of the significantly differing values of the American and Turkish cultures (Dindi, Gazur, Gazur, & Kırkköprü-Dindi, 1989).

Table 1 A Comparison of the Values of American and Turkish Cultures

American culture	Turkish culture
Time/action	Interaction
Individualism	Group affiliation
Goal-oriented	Being-oriented
Direct/open	Indirect/tactful
Disclosing	Face saving/honor
Informal	Formal
Assertive	Passive
Casual friendships	Deep friendships
Equality	Hierarchy
Competition	Cooperation
Optimistic	Faith/fatalistic

As seen in Table 1, there are differences between Turkish and American cultures. However, it is interesting to note that Roger's person-centered approach — a more individualistic approach that appears to be in conflict with Muslim beliefs emphasizing collective behavior — is widely adopted in Turkey. There might be two reasons for this: (1) the lecturers received their graduate education in the United States and have concentrated on this theory; (2) some of the tenets of the person-centered approach overlap with the Muslim mentality. For instance, the tenets “accepting without questioning” and “respect” are in parallel with the Muslim mentality. Nevertheless, the commonly highlighted concept of individualism clashes with it.

In view of the above, socio-cultural theories are seen as more suitable to Asian countries. Poorman (2003) has stated that multicultural theories of helping are integrative socio-cultural theories emphasizing both similarities and differences among people. Integrative theories blend together two or more theories or various viewpoints rather than being guided by a single theory. Integrative theories do not simply combine selected techniques isolated from their assumption. Instead, integrative theories require an understanding of the foundation of different theories as they strive to intermingle theories based on compatibility and empirical support. Multicultural theories of helping share an integrated focus on the social and cultural influences that shape and maintain human behavior and problems encountered. In Poorman's (2003) words:

Socio-cultural theories of helping in counseling look at humans as the product of social and cultural influences. People are assumed to have a contextual orientation, and it is these contexts that determine the development of human identity, growth, and development. Racial, class, gender, orientation, ability, and religious traditions constitute elements of social and cultural contexts in which growth and development occur for people. (p. 245)

The second deficiency of counselor education programs is that there is no lesson concerning the development of crisis-handling skills in these programs. As Turkey locates in the seismic zone, people live under the threat of earthquake. To illustrate, two big earthquakes occurred respectively in August 1999 in Golcuk and in November 1999 in Duzce. Large numbers of people suffered from posttraumatic stress. Difficulties were encountered because of the lack of qualified staff that could help the victims.

The third deficiency relates to the negligence of counselor education programs toward family-oriented techniques. For instance, when parents go to school to ask about their children's academic progress, the counselor proves to be ineffective in responding to such questions. This can be illustrated from the author's experience in 1987–1989 when the author was a counselor. However, marriages, families, parenting are important values in Turkish cultures. Family is seen as important for the success of a person in terms of maintaining psychological health, and achieving academic and professional life. Therefore, marriage is an important social behavior. The annual average marriage rate is 6.84 per thousand in Turkey (T.C. Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2002a). Family ties are strong. Therefore, more family-oriented techniques should be taught in counselor education.

The last deficiency of the programs is that it does not live up to accreditation standards. There are no requirements for a formally recognized certification as a professional counselor, nor are there any procedures for official accreditation to undergraduate and graduate training programs in counseling.

Lack of Indigenous Books and Materials

A few books are written locally about school counseling in Turkey. In other words, there is serious lack of indigenous textbooks and literature

for undergraduate and graduate counseling education programs. The counseling field still depends heavily on American literature and research findings. The dearth of indigenous literature has reduced the quality of the education programs (Dogan, 2000). Moreover, there is a lack of standardized counseling tools, such as interest, aptitude, intelligence, and personality tests. Organized occupational information is also unavailable. These hinder the work of counselors and decreased the quality of counseling.

Future Challenges and Trends of Counseling in Turkey

The discussion of Turkey's future counselor education is often focused on demographic, economic, and social trends that will affect the profile of tomorrow's students, their families, and the structure of schools. In this regard, socio-cultural theories of helping are important. To understand clearly the difficulty of implementing Western counseling methods under Turkish culture, one must look at how problems are typically handled by Turks. When having problems, Turks usually consult with family members because of their strong family relationship. They are generally reluctant to admit their problems to outsiders, just like people of several developing countries (Soliman, 1991).

As indicated above, the socio-cultural theories assume people as "the product of social and cultural influences." Moreover, it is obvious that the development of self-identity and of all other related aspects of humans can only be achieved under a socio-cultural context. So the faculty members of counseling departments in Turkey's universities should emphasize socio-cultural theories of helping.

Although it is generally considered that counselor education will continue to grow and gain a broad base of acceptance and support in Turkey, there are a number of challenges now confronting counselor

education in the country. The following recommendations may ameliorate the issues in counselor education and counseling in Turkey:

1. The faculty members of counseling departments in universities should place more emphasis on cultures and the development of human potential. In other words, American counseling theories and practices should not be directly transported to Turkey. Because school counseling cannot be conducted in isolation from larger events in society, adapting and integrating Western counseling theories in the Turkish cultural context is necessary.
2. Nearly all counseling education programs should include the topic on crisis intervention. For example, crisis counseling is urgently needed for every educational setting in Turkey to prepare students with the skills to cope with any unfortunate events (e.g., terrorist attacks or accidents of deadly characters) or disaster, and to act in the face of these misfortune. Crisis intervention is also a general concern of all counselors and a must for those who provide school mental health services.
3. Turkey started to provide counseling services without careful consideration about how and where such services should be provided. For example, a standard was set to stipulate the ratio between counselor and students as 1 to 300–500. However, there are 13,686,616 primary and secondary students. According to the standard, the number of counselors is obviously inadequate. To compensate for this, CHE and MNE hastened to take measures. Whereas CHE increased the number of existing counseling programs, MNE offered short-term certificate programs to increase qualified counselors. Unfortunately, both of these attempts did not bring about the intended results to make up for the need. Instead, people of inadequate qualifications were appointed. In view of the above, CHE should reduce the number of universities that offer degrees in counseling. The contents and standards of the current counselor education programs should also be developed and upgraded by qualified faculty and by the use of excellent textbooks and other media (Dogan, 2000).

4. The Faculty members of counseling departments in Turkey's universities should place greater emphasis on research and evaluation in order to develop a counseling approach appropriate for the Turkish culture. Like other cultures, the Turkish culture has its own structure. For example, family has a high regard in Turkish tradition and people prefer to solve their problems within their families rather than talking about the problems with outsiders. Hortaçsu (1997) observed that adolescents consulted their parents most when they felt they need help to solve their problems. Therefore, more family-oriented techniques should be included in counselor education programs in Turkey.
5. Training and accreditation standards for counseling programs and practices should be designed to establish professional identity and obtain legitimate role among other mental health professionals.
6. In response to the rapid development of technology, the faculty members of counseling departments should place more emphasis on its utilization to counseling, and also on the emotional crisis that may result from the fast pace of technological development. "Talking cure" will soon become "talking and technologically facilitated experiential cure."

Another area of rapid development is the growth of e-mail and the Internet, with which counselors are enabled to have access to the rich databank of the development of counseling and its related disciplines worldwide. They can also join the related discussion groups online.

7. The majority of counselors in Turkey have only undergraduate degree. Their academic level should be improved.
8. The faculty members of counseling departments should pay increasing attention to psychological education in their curriculum. Goleman (1999) stated that the transfer of basic life skills does not happen as well as it used to. Schools, however, offer a vehicle to ensure that each new generation learns the basic arts of life-impulsive control, managing anger and anxiety, motivation, empathy, collaboration, and working out disagreement positively (pp. 136–137).

To conclude, the U.S.-origin counseling should not be directly transported to Turkey. Because counseling cannot be conducted in isolation from larger events in society, adapting and integrating Western counseling theories in the Turkish cultural context is necessary.

Summary

This article describes the development of counselor education in Turkey since its beginning in the early 1950s. Preparation and training programs for counselors at both undergraduate and graduate levels are offered by eighteen universities in Turkey. Counselor training must include the knowledge of the present status of counseling in Turkey and the skills to deal with current issues. Socio-cultural theories of helping must also be an integrating domain in counselor education. In addition, this article depicts the future challenges and trends of counselor education. In view that the aims of counselor education and counseling are to promote students' potential and to develop their competence to an optimal level, it is recommended that Western counseling theories should not be imported directly without adaptation to the Turkish culture.

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土耳其輔導教育的發展：現況及展望

本文旨在說明土耳其輔導教育的發展，尤其在以下幾方面：（1）土耳其輔導專業的歷史簡介；（2）輔導人員的培訓；（3）輔導教育的現況；（4）土耳其輔導人員面對的重大問題；以及（5）輔導教育的挑戰及發展趨勢。