

## **Counseling in Turkey**

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### ***Counseling History in Turkey***

Counseling has a rather short history in Turkey. The current Turkish counseling movement and its programs have been largely influenced by American counseling programs, models, and philosophy all of which were introduced in the 1950's when exchange programs were implemented as part of the Marshall Program for post WWII development. The Turkish counseling movement started in the 1950s and has been influenced from movements and advances in counseling in the United States. Doğan (2000) divided the history of counseling in Turkey into five periods: (1) taking initial steps (1950–1956); (2) formative years (1957–1969); (3) establishing counseling services in schools (1970–1981); (4) establishing undergraduate programs in counseling (1982–1995); and (5) assigning counselors to schools (1996–present). During the first period, the Ministry of National Education offered scholarships for teachers to study abroad. During the second period, the first educational psychology and guidance department and graduate programs in counseling were established. During 1970 and 1971, the third period, the Ministry of National Education employed counselors to work in secondary schools. During the fourth period (1982-1995), the first undergraduate program in counseling was established, followed by six other universities admitting students to undergraduate programs in guidance and counseling. During the fifth period (1996-present), many significant developments took place. For example, the chairs and co-chairs of counseling departments held meetings regarding the reconstruction of counseling programs. They aimed to standardize counselor education programs at the undergraduate and graduate level.

Counseling training programs offer specialization only in school counseling. Almost all counselors work in the education system. There are no programs that offer specialization in counseling psychology or mental health counseling (Korkut, 2007).

### ***Number of counselor training programs***

A total of 66 counseling programs are housed in 39 universities. Most of these universities are public universities. Only two private universities offer counseling programs. There are 31 undergraduate degree programs, 21 master's degree programs, and 14 doctorate degree programs (Çınarbaş, Korkut-Owen, Çiftçi, 2009).

### ***Level of training to be employed as a counselor (bachelors/masters)***

An undergraduate degree is enough to be employed as a school counselor. Candidates completing initial training are required to complete an exam called the KPSS-teacher version (Civil Service Personnel Selection Exam-Kamu Personel Seçme Sınavı) that is a nationally administered and highly centralized exam. Candidates who successfully complete this exam and are deemed qualified to work as school counselors and may be assigned to vacant counseling positions throughout the country or they may apply to a private schools or university preparatory school (Korkut-Owen, Owen, & Ballestero, 2009). Although undergraduate training tends to focus on school counseling, some counselor educators argue that counselor education must be at the graduate level (Kuzgun, 2000). Others, largely because of a desperate need for counselors, advocate that an undergraduate degree is sufficient to practice as a counselor (Akkoyun, 1995). Masters level training is used as an intermediate step towards doctoral work or as a necessary degree for working as an administrator of guidance services in schools. A doctoral degree is necessary for becoming a counselor educator or a consultant for the Ministry of National Education (MONE) (Korkut, 2007).

### ***Number of counselors currently working in various settings (by level of training)***

Counselors play a large role in the Turkish school system. The number of schools that have counseling services has been increasing. There are 42,371

primary and secondary schools, 13,469.115 students, and 11,820 counselors. In addition, 933 counselors work in 148 Guidance Research Centers (total, 12,753 counselors) (MONE, 2008). Other institutions, such as the Turkish Employment Organization (İŞKUR), General Directory of Security, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Security, and Special Education and Rehabilitation Centers also employ counselors. Private practice is not common among counselors (Korkut, 2007).

Counselors typically work at elementary and secondary schools. Some of the issues and tasks that require counselors' attention are adjustment issues, educational guidance such as guidance and support for the university entrance exam, career guidance, test anxiety, stress, issues surrounding friendships and romantic relationships, internet addiction, and family issues. Counselors usually conduct guidance programs and psychoeducational programs in groups of 10 or more. They rarely provide individual counseling. If individual counseling is required, it is typically limited to 2 or 3 sessions. Solution focused and cognitive-behavioral techniques are commonly used. Counselors may also meet with parents and teachers to collaborate in helping students (Çınarbaş, Korkut-Owen, Çiftçi, 2009).

### ***Existence of standard counselor training curricula/ Certification/licensure/credentialing options for counselors***

Under current structures, only the Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association (TPCGA) and Higher Education Council (HEC) are involved in standardization and accreditation activities. In 1995, the TPCGA developed ethical standards for the counseling profession in order to heighten the standards of the profession (Korkut, 2007). That same year TPCGA members stated that there is a discrepancy between the job descriptions of counselors and the curricula of counselor education programs. Moreover, they agreed that there are disparities among universities in terms of the content of counseling courses (Akkoyun, 1995).

In counselor education programs, clinical practice courses are generally limited in scope and fail to provide extensive opportunities for skill development. Efforts are underway to provide more extended practicum opportunities (Korkut, 2007).

While there is a strong drive towards standardization, counselor education in Turkey needs an organizational structure within which to establish its professional identity (Dogan, 2000). At present, standardized criteria have not been established for selection of counseling students into counselor education programs. Turkey does not have formally recognized requirements for certification as a professional counselor and procedures are not yet in place for official accreditation of undergraduate and graduate training programs. Finally, a specialty title and definition for counseling needs to be established. While there is a strong drive towards standardization, counselor education in Turkey needs an organizational structure within which to establish its professional identity (Dogan, 2000). At present, standardized criteria have not been established for selection of counseling students into counselor education programs. Turkey does not have formally recognized requirements for certification as a professional counselor and procedures are not yet in place for official accreditation of undergraduate and graduate training programs. Finally, a specialty title and definition for counseling needs to be established. TPCGA also prepared a manuscript for legislation in 2007 and presented it to parliament (Çınarbaş, Korkut-Owen, Çiftçi, 2009). It is on process.

### ***Professional associations for counselors/to which counselors belong***

Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association (TPCGA) is the only association about counseling which it was established in 1989. There were 2 small associations but they are embedded in TPCGA. TPCGA has approximately 1900 members who are counselor educators and counselors.

### ***Conferences within country and region that counselors typically attend***

Since 1991, the TPCGA has held a conference every 2 years. The tenth counseling conference was held 21-23 October 2009, in Çukurova University in Adana, Turkey. Since 2003, we have started to have international guests. TPCGA has a counseling journal and bulletin which are published 2 times in a year.

### ***Goals relative to accreditation and credentialing of professional counselors***

As mentioned in the first paragraph, the year 2000, the chairs and co-chairs of university counseling programs began meeting to discuss issues and initiative associated with counselor training. These gatherings evolved into annual meetings with TPCGA support in 2003 and provide a venue for ongoing and country-wide discussions that continue to promote change and progress toward more uniform and higher quality programs of counselor preparation. These discussion have included how programs of training can be developed in concert with ASCA and CACREP competencies and the Turkish national and cultural realities. The continuing goal of these meetings is to standardize counselor education programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Though these standardization processes have been limited by governmental and legal complications, several universities have continued the work towards this goal.

Surprisingly, in 2007 a national counseling program and curriculum was adopted by the Turkish Higher Education Council with extremely limited input from counselor educators and was sent to universities for implementation (Korkut-Owen, 2007). This action demonstrates effectively how centralized is the higher educational system in Turkey. While this national program and curriculum was opposed by most counselor educators and the TPCGA all universities were required to change their curriculum and program to conform to that specified by the Higher Education Council. Efforts continue among counselor educators and the TPCGA to influence the structure of counselor education programs across the nation to emphasize ASCA/CACREP competencies and to provide for areas of counseling specialization at the graduate level of preparation.

There are some recent developments in Turkey relating to cooperative initiatives between TPCGA and both American (ACA, NBCC and CACREP) and European (European Association for Counseling) professional counseling groups. At the present time these initiatives are in their early stages but will undoubtedly continue to evolve and provide greater opportunities for international professional cooperation and sharing.

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