



## Continuing Education Needs of School Counselors

Filiz Gültekin, Ahu Arıcıoğlu

Uludag University, Faculty of Education; Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education (Turkey)

[gultekinfiliz@hotmail.com](mailto:gultekinfiliz@hotmail.com), [ahuaricioğlu@yahoo.com](mailto:ahuaricioğlu@yahoo.com)

### 1. Introduction

Continuing education and training are increasingly becoming an integral part of career biographies. Above all on account of the changes in the fields of technology and labour organization and the general improvement in the average skills profile, it is becoming increasingly infrequent for education/training processes to concluding at the point of completion of initial training.

One major conclusion seems evident from this synthesis of 30 years of empirical work an professional statements: School counseling interventions have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. Individual and small group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation activities seem to contribute directly to students' success in the classroom and beyond, and school counselors should spend the majority of their time performing these interventions [1]. Becoming a counselor is a lifelong process. It continues well past the formal education of obtaining a degree or certificate and includes participation in professional counseling-related activities. Counselors who stop reading professional publications or stop attending in-service workshops and conventions quickly become dated in the delivery of skills [2].

According to American Counseling Association and Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Association, counselors have an ethical obligation to practice "within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, state and national professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience" [3] [4]. Competence in counseling is difficult to define, but training is a basic component in developing competence to counsel. Continuing education is also an ethical obligation. Ethical standard C.2.f. states that counselors recognize the need for continuing education to keep abreast of current information and developments, and that "they take steps to maintain competence in the skills they use, are open to new procedures, and keep current with the diverse populations and specific populations with whom they work." [5].

Psychological counselors have educated through four years in undergraduate level in Turkey. This education process includes basic courses such as human development theory, helping relationships, counseling theories, group counseling, life-style and career counseling, appraisal, research and evaluation, and professional orientation, supervised practical internships in school. Since the syllabus of psychological counselor education programmes is prepared by the Higher Education Council (YOK) in Turkey, they are almost the same across all universities.

Graduated students in counseling fields, have many opportunity for employment in different sectors, most of them work in schools. There is no additional qualification, courses, certificate etc. necessary apart from undergraduate degree. Therefore, counselors professional development depend on their own responsibility. Consequently, some of them have trouble to follow new trends in counseling.

Psychological counselors should have qualifications which fulfill contemporary human and society needs. For instance; divergent cultures continue to influence educational development in schools [6]. Rawls stated that since the projected demographic changes of multicultural students in public schools provide the impetus for training school counselors at the pre-service and in-service level on how to work with diverse children and families, this fact is also important to consider when deciding upon the continuing education needs of school counselors [7].

### 2. Method

In this study, working at different levels of education, school counselors' preference of topics they need continuing education, in which way and by which institutions/people to be given has been determined. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 47 years ( $M = 30,21$ ;  $SD = 6,81$ ). All participants had worked as counselor at least 1 year. The majority of participants were women (60,9%). Demographic characteristics of participants are given in Table 1. The data were collected via Continuing Education Needs Form. E-mails were sent to participants. 46 valid data were analyzed by descriptive statistic.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

		f	%
School level	Elementary/secondary school	28	60,9
	High School	6	13,0
	Vocational High School	3	6,5
	Guidance Research Center	9	19,6
Gender	Female	28	60,9
	Male	18	39,1

School type	Public	44	95,7
	Private	2	4,3
Educational level	Undergraduate	38	82,6
	Master program	7	15,2
	Doctoral program	1	2,2
Graduated program	Psychological Counseling	39	84,8
	Psychology	4	8,7
	Other	3	6,5
Tenure	1-5 years	34	73,9
	6-11 years	5	10,9
	12 +	7	15,2

### 3. Findings

Continuing education needs of school counseling are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2. Continuing Education Needs

Education Needs	f	%
Current issues in psychological counseling applications	27	58,70
Psychopathology	26	56,52
Working with children -using play techniques	26	56,52
Application of psychological tests	25	54,35
Assessing and managing suicide risk.	25	54,35
Crisis intervention	23	50,00
Understands group dynamics—including counseling, psycho-educational, task, and peer helping groups—	23	50,00
Selecting and implementing to appropriate counseling interventions	22	47,83
Reduce violence and aggression, coping with bullying	22	47,83
Group counseling methods	20	43,48
Vocational development, decision model, vocational counseling	19	41,30
Development of children and adolescents	17	36,96
Working with students from different cultures	16	34,78
Design, implement, manage, and evaluate programs to enhance the academic, career, and personal/social development of students.	16	34,78
Test evaluation techniques	15	32,61
Know to addiction and working with addict	15	32,61
Working with individuals who have learning disabilities	14	30,43
Career development program planning, implement, administration, and evaluation	13	28,26
Group leadership skills	13	28,26
Multicultural counseling	12	26,09
Relationships with other human service providers	12	26,09
Test development techniques	12	26,09
Ethical standards and legal responsibility	10	21,74
Working with individuals with mental disabilities	10	21,74
Effective presentation techniques	10	21,74
Helping students identify strengths and cope with environmental and developmental problems.	10	21,74



Counselors' roles and responsibilities	9	19,57
Consultation	8	17,39
Theories of counseling	6	13,04
Working with hearing / visually impaired individuals	6	13,04
Research methods	6	13,04
Working with individuals with disabilities	4	8,70
Working with gifted individuals	4	8,70
Theoretical knowledge of current issues in psychological counseling	3	6,52
Counselors' professional roles and functions	2	4,35

As is seen in Table 2, school counselors need continuing education about that current issues in psychological counseling applications; psychopathology; working with children -using play techniques; assessing and managing suicide risk; application of psychological tests; crisis intervention; understands group dynamics; reduce violence and aggression, coping with bullying; selecting and implementing to appropriate counseling interventions. From which school counselors to receive training on these issues will be institutions of their choice and at what level they are capable of this are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The adequacy of the institution

	Institution	%	Very inadequate		Inadequate		Adequate		Very adequate	
The Ministry of National Education	16	34,78	12	26,08	13	28,26	17	36,95	3	6,52
Universities	22	47,82			6	13,04	25	54,34	14	30,43
Private institutions	8	17,39	7	15,21	10	21,73	21	45,65	7	15,21

As shown in the table, school counselors, universities, institutions see it as the most competent about taking this training. This in-service training followed by the national education ministry.

#### 4. Conclusion

Most of counselors are working in schools in Turkey. School counselors need to develop professional knowledge and skills due to problems in schools, students who have different characteristics and needs, changes of educational methods and approaches. Counselors able to join in-service training, seminars, courses, conferences etc. for develop professional knowledge and skills. These trainings are provided by private institutions, professional associations, in particular The Ministry of National Education. In addition, counselors may participate in conferences, seminars, workshops, training programs that they choose. However, these training it is not possible to reach all school counselors or it is not provide counselors' needs. In this context, to determine the continuing education needs of school counselors and provide services, is important for their professional competence and counseling ethic.

The results show that, counselors need to continuing education that current issues in psychological counseling applications. Around 70 % of counselors have in-service training. Most of them joined the national/international conferences "rarely or sometimes". Counselors don't join the conferences, however conferences are significant opportunity for to know new issue and approach in counseling.

Some issues are given via elective courses such as play techniques, suicide, crisis intervention, violence, aggression, bully. But this courses are not in every programs. There are in-service training about violence, aggression, bully but especially inexperienced counselors need to continuing education.

Counselor education programs provide information about the structural, sociological, and cultural changes in society, and explore expected outcomes and trends related to these developments [6]. But Turkish counselor education programs don't involve "to work with students from different cultures"

Counselors accepted the universities as a reliable and adequate source about this training. In this context, The Ministry of National Education should be in cooperation with universities for this training. Continuing education courses which lead by universities will have positive effects to counselors' professional development. These courses will have reflections to quality of counseling in Turkey.



## References

- [1] Borders, L. D. And Drury, S. M. (1992). Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners. *Journal of Counseling and Development*. 70, 487-498.
- [2] Gladding, S. (2009). The history, trend, and future of professional counseling. In F. Korkut-Owen, R. Özyürek & D. Owen (Eds), *Gelişen Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik* (3-16). Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi.
- [3] ACA (2005). *2005 ACA code of ethics*. Retrieved March 3, 2012, from <http://www.counseling.org/Resources/CodeOfEthics/TP/Home/CT2.aspx>
- [4] Türk Pdr-Der. (2007). *Psikolojik danışma ve rehberlik alanında çalışanlar için etik kurallar*. Ankara: Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Derneği Yayınları.
- [5] Herlihy, B. and Corey, G. (1996). Competence. In B. Herlihy & G. Corey, *ACA ethical standards casebook* (217-228). Alexandria: American Counseling Association.
- [6] Schmidt, J.J. (2003). *Counseling in schools*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- [7] Rawls, G. (2007). State licensure requirements for school counselors: Implications for multicultural continuing education. *Journal of School Counseling*. 5 (10), 1-16.