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**UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGIST AND EDUCATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGIST IDENTITY IN TURKEY**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this presentation is to question how much and how far are the Faculties of Arts and Sciences and Educational Sciences in Turkey, which are the main faculties for educating people for future scientists and teachers, able to give this aforesaid critical-rational scientific approach to their graduates. A case in hand is the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Department Of Counseling and Guidance in the Faculty of Educational Sciences. Both counseling psychology and educational psychology are different areas of specialization in psychology, and definitely need to be graduate programs as it is practiced in the USA and in Europe. An undergraduate degree in counseling and guidance is not enough for the graduate of that program to be either a counseling psychologist or educational psychologist. The identity crisis and overlaps between these fields can only be prevented by converting the current undergraduate level counseling and guidance departments into graduate programs within the faculty of education and prepare joint graduate programs with psychology departments in the Arts and Sciences faculties.

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Universities have been at the centre of social evolution since their creation in medieval times. Universities are part of world history. Universities modeled Europe and from Europe, universities participated in modeling the world and its development. It is well assumed in the literature that universities were created as a social entity able to create, store, and transmit knowledge (Morley, 2003; Tuunainen, 2005; Lowman, 2010). The ways, models, and tools used to develop these three basic functions have evolved from their creation to this day, adjusting to socioeconomic and political circumstances.

According to Wilhelm von Humbolt's definition, the university is an institution where the education in all fields of science is given together with research activities within a unified system. Popper in his book *The Logic of Scientific Research* gives a definition of science which complements Humbolt's idea of the university. According to Popper, the aim of science is to

expand the range of science by producing lots of hypotheses and conducting necessary observations in accordance with these hypotheses, and also to try to falsify the already produced hypotheses in order to put forward new ones. Hence, the function of the university as an institution which is in the service of society, besides educating people is to train people who have scientific thinking skills combined with a rational-critical attitude as summarized in Popper's account of science.

The aim of this presentation is to question how much and how far are the Faculties of Arts and Sciences and Educational Sciences in Turkey, which are the main faculties for educating people for future scientists and teachers, able to give this aforesaid critical-rational scientific approach to their graduates. A case in hand is the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Department Of Counseling and Guidance in the Faculty of Educational Sciences. Department of Psychology is normally designed to educate people in all fields of psychology, including guidance and counseling. When a psychologist who has graduated from a Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences would like to get a masters degree in educational psychology or counseling psychology, s/he should enroll a joint masters program between two faculties. But, instead, we have a Department Of Counseling and Guidance in the Faculty of Educational Sciences with the pretense of educating people to become counseling psychologists and/or educational psychologists; and certainly the graduates of the Department of Counseling and Guidance in the Faculty of Educational Sciences certainly are not psychologists, but believe themselves to be. This situation causes a number of problems in the field such as confusing identities of graduates. These two faculties should be designed to compliment and complete each other rather than competing with each other.

But before continuing with the discussion on the conditions of the unification between the two faculties, let's set out the different identities of counseling and educational psychologists.

### **The identity of Educational Psychologist**

Educational psychology is a sub discipline of psychology concerned with teaching and learning processes. It applies the methods and theories of psychology and has its own method and theories as well. But there has been some disagreement on what it really is. Some people believe educational psychology is simply knowledge gained from psychology and applied to the activities of the classroom. Others believe it involves applying the methods of psychology to

study classroom and school life (Grinder, 1981; Clifford, 1984; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). Today, the accepted view about educational psychology is that it is a distinct discipline with its own theories, research methods, problems and techniques. “Educational psychology is distinct from other branches of psychology because it has the understanding and improvement of education as its primary goal” (Wittrock, 1992: 138).

The goals of educational psychology are to understand and to improve the teaching and learning processes. Educational psychologists develop knowledge and methods; they also use the knowledge and methods of psychology and other related disciplines to study learning and teaching in everyday situations. Educational psychology involves content and process. The findings from research offer a number of possible answers to specific problems, and the theories offer perspectives for analyzing almost any situation that may arise (Woolfolk, 1998: 19). Since educational psychology is the psychological study of everyday problems of education, it provides principles, models, theories, teaching procedures and practical methods of instruction and evaluation on the one hand, and research methods, statistical analyses, measurement and assessment procedures appropriate for studying the thinking and affective processes of learners, on the other hand.

But, contemporary society’s expectations of educational psychology and of role for educational psychologists within these expectations are far from clear. Since the role of educational psychologists is not clear, there has been a long lasting stereotype about them “as psychometricians and lately gatekeepers to special education, in favour of a supportive role to pupils and, teachers and parents” (Love, 2009: 3).

An educational psychologist is concerned with helping children or young people who are experiencing problems within an educational setting with the aim of enhancing their learning. Challenges may include social or emotional problems or learning difficulties. Work is with individual clients or groups, advising teachers, parents, social workers and other professionals. Client work involves an assessment of the child using observation, interviews and test materials. Educational psychologists offer a wide range of appropriate interventions, such as learning programmes and collaborative work with teachers or parents. They also provide in-service training for teachers and other professionals on issues such as behaviour and stress management

Stoker, Gersch, Fox, Lown, and Morris (2001) draw attention to the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE) document *Educational Psychology Services (England): Current role, good practice and future directions* (Kelly & Gray, 2000). This highlights multi-agency working<sup>1</sup> along with early years' work and work with schools as the three "core functions that should be delivered by all Educational Psychology Services" (Stoker, Gersch, Fox, Lown, & Morris, 2001, p.88). With respect to the distinctive role of the educational psychologist within multi-agency working, five common themes can be distinguished. These are "the use of psychology, developing a holistic view, evidence based practice, interpersonal skills and experience of working in the education system" (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009: 104).

### **The Identity of Counseling Psychologist**

Counseling psychology is one of the largest specialty areas within psychology. The *Society of Counseling Psychology* describes the field as "a psychological specialty that facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span with a focus on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental and organizational concerns" (Society of Counselling Psychology, Division 17, American Psychological Association [APA], 2007). Many counseling psychologists provide psychotherapy services. Counseling psychology focuses on providing therapeutic treatments to clients who experience a wide variety of symptoms. The counseling psychologist working with a client tries to find meaning in each person's experience, so that s/he can manage his/her life in a way that is less affected by distress. "The counseling psychologist is well-placed to understand the person's system and to work with them to find meaning, see the development of core beliefs, see the origins of negative automatic thoughts, understand the defences, stay with the client as they unpack experiences" (James, 2009: 65).

The daily activities of clinical and counseling psychologists are highly similar. They devote the bulk of their day to psychotherapy, teaching, research, and supervision (Mayne et al., 2000). Traditionally, the main difference between counseling and clinical psychology is their perspective and training. While both clinical and counseling psychologists perform psychotherapy, those working as clinical psychologists typically deal with clients suffering from

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<sup>1</sup> Multi-agency working brings together practitioners from different sectors and professions to provide an integrated way of working to support children, young people and families. It is a way of working that

more severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or paranoia. Counseling psychologists often work with people who are experiencing less severe symptoms and focus more on the psychologically healthy individuals (Brems & Johnson, 1997; Bechtold, et. all, 2000).

The treatment outlook can also differ between clinical and counseling psychology. Clinical psychologists often approach mental illness from a medical perspective, while counseling psychologists often take a more general approach that encompasses a range of psychotherapeutic techniques.

Counseling psychology is unique in its attention both to normal developmental issues and to problems associated with physical, emotional and mental disorders. “Through the integration of theory, research and practice and with a sensitivity to multicultural issues, counseling psychology encompasses a broad range of practices that help people improve their well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crises, and increase their ability to live more highly functioning lives” (Society of Counselling Psychology, Division 17, American Psychological Association [APA], 2007).

This definition describes perfectly counseling psychology’s commitment to the scientist-practitioner training model at graduate level. This model endorses a combination of research and professional practice. The scientist-practitioner model is a critical element of counseling psychology’s identity, but its relevance and the effectiveness of its implementation in graduate programs have been questioned in recent years (Vespia, Sauer & Lyddon, 2006). A scientist-practitioner identity is determined not by counseling psychologists’ job titles but rather by how they do their work (Meara, 1990; Vespia, 2006; James, 2010). Training as a counseling psychologist and scientist practitioner, Kristin Vespia (2006) suggests that graduate or postgraduate “programs [in counseling psychology] should be encouraged to link research and practice early in students’ training, to provide faculty models of that integration, to involve practitioners in training and to reinforce research involvement” (Vespia, 2006: 267).

### **The Boundaries Between Educational and Counseling Psychology**

As is clear from the above descriptions, counseling and educational psychology have different routes and orientations. The only common thread that binds them together is their roots

in the science of psychology. The influence of the science of psychology shows itself perfectly below in the words of a counseling psychologist who writes about influences on her as a graduate student, work and academic and instructional experiences in a School of Psychology: “In particular, my first degree in psychology enhanced my practice as a counselor, whereas theory, research and instruction expanded my knowledge, my social-political involvement as well as my development both as a person and as a counseling psychologist” (Athanasiaides, 2008: 2008). Similarly, Vernon C. Hall, an aging educational psychologist suggests “that the graduate training program in educational psychology fits well into an all inclusive psychology department” (1997: 297). He goes on to say:

Although I held a joint appointment in the college of education, I spent most of my time teaching and working with graduate students in a college of arts and sciences. In retrospect this was a good thing for both myself and my graduate students. In fact, I believe that the model of the “all university psychology department” which was originally in place at Syracuse University is a good one. Although a psychologist may have had responsibilities and even salary from the other units (e.g. education, management...) the home department was psychology (Hall, 1997: 299).

Whether it is counseling psychology, clinical psychology or educational psychology, these fields of study are graduate programs in the universities in Europe and in the USA. This orientation is very clear in Norcross’ discussion of the differences between clinical and counseling psychology in terms of their location: “clinical psychology graduate programs are almost exclusively housed in departments or schools of psychology, whereas counseling psychology graduate programs are located in a variety of department and divisions. A 1995 survey of APA-accredited counseling psychology programs found that 18 % of them were housed in colleges of arts and science, 75 % were housed in schools of education, and 6 % in interdepartmental or interinstitutional settings” (Norcross, 2000: 20).

The same is also true for educational psychology as seen in Vernon C. Hall’s (1997) words: “educational psychology was always defined as the scientific study of psychology in education...the requirements of the educational psychology graduate program were among the most comprehensive in the department. The program of study included courses from most areas represented in the department as well as courses from faculty in the college of education (e.g. qualitative methods and curriculum desing)” (Hall, 1997: 299).

### **The Current Status of Educational and Counseling Psychology in Turkey**

In Turkey there are psychology departments located in the arts and sciences faculties and besides this, there are psychological counseling and guidance departments located in the faculties of education, both offering undergraduate and graduate degrees. The graduates of psychology departments in the arts and sciences faculties are definitely psychologists who can be specialized in any area of psychology including counseling and educational psychology. But the graduates of counseling and guidance departments in the faculties of education are not psychologists and certainly neither counseling psychologists, even though they consider themselves to be counseling psychologists. One of the employment areas for the graduates of counseling and guidance departments is the position of school psychologist or as it is called in Turkey, guidance teacher in elementary and high schools as it is called in Turkey's education system. What does a guidance teacher do in the education system in Turkey is really what is required from an educational psychologist. Hence, the graduates of the counseling and guidance departments are also considered to be educational psychologists.

The idea of opening an undergraduate level counseling and guidance department in the faculty of education in Turkey has come forward with an effort to fulfill the need for school psychologists in the elementary and high school system. The first counseling and guidance department in Turkey was opened in the Faculty of Education in Gazi University in 1965 under the name "Guidance Department". The underlying idea for this department was to train school psychologists or guidance teachers for elementary and high schools. Psychology departments at that time would not meet the need. The situation was especially bleak when it comes to graduate level specialization in counseling, educational or clinical psychology. But, today, there are enough psychology departments offering both undergraduate and graduate programs in all areas of psychology including counseling, educational and clinical psychology. Counseling and guidance departments in the faculty of education just mimicks the program of psychology departments, but because their program is not as comprehensive as given in a psychology department, their graduates would not get the title of a psychologist; yet, they think they are.

Both counseling psychology and educational psychology are different areas of specialization in psychology, and definitely need to be graduate programs as it is practiced in the USA and in Europe. Barbara Douglas and Pam James in their editorial paper in counseling psychology state that "there are two pathways to chartership as a counseling psychologist; the

course route and the British Psychological Society's Independent Route" (Douglas & James, 2010: 7). The course route as is indicated below is a graduate study program either in psychology departments in arts and sciences faculties or in faculties of education. According to the editorial by Douglas and James "the qualification in counseling psychology has been in operation since 2004" and the course given in the program "was a taught doctorate at the University of Surrey" (age.: 7). The same is also true for the specialization in educational psychology (Hall, 1997; Love, 2009; Sheppard, 1978, Lucas, 1989).

An undergraduate degree in counseling and guidance is not enough for the graduate of that program to be either a counseling psychologist or educational psychologist. Especially, because the graduates of counseling and guidance departments see themselves as counseling psychologists and they reject to be called school psychologist, they experience an identity crisis and this crisis reflects upon their work motivation.

This situation creates an identity problem especially for the graduates of psychology departments in arts and sciences faculties, who gets master or doctorate degrees in counseling and guidance departments in the faculty of education. Since the borders between clinical and counseling psychology is not clear, the psychologists who get masters degree in counseling and guidance departments in the faculty of education consider themselves as clinical psychologists instead of counseling psychologists. In most cases the graduates of counseling and guidance departments in the faculty of education who continue their masters program in the same department, consider themselves as being a clinical psychologist while they can be a counseling psychologist at the most.

## **In Conclusion**

Counseling psychology and educational psychology are separate and independent fields of psychology, both of which require a graduate degree for specialization. The title of a school psychologist or a guidance teacher as it is called in Turkey can be obtained only after a graduate degree in educational psychology after a basic psychology education in an undergraduate program in a Psychology Department. The graduate degree can both be obtained in a psychology department or in a counseling and guidance department.

In the case of counseling psychology the situation is more serious, since the graduates of counseling and guidance departments tend to see themselves as counseling psychologists while



they are not even psychologists at all. Psychological counseling is a very specialized field whose boundaries with clinical psychology should be drawn clearly. Neither an undergraduate of psychology department nor an undergraduate of counseling and guidance department is and can be a counseling psychologist. The title can only be obtained after completing a graduate program in counseling psychology in a psychology department or in a joint graduate program with psychology and counseling and guidance departments.

The identity crisis and overlaps between these fields can only be prevented by converting the current undergraduate level counseling and guidance departments into graduate programs within the faculty of education and prepare joint graduate programs with psychology departments in the Arts and Sciences faculties. The Association of Turkish Psychology should implement policy changes towards this direction and set guidelines for joint graduate programs.

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