Vocational Counselling in the Context of Philosophy of Education

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Abstract Education is not limited only to transferring knowledge in human life. It also aims to develop the person in all aspects. Educating people who can think creatively, analytically and philosophically is one of the main aims of modern education. This aim helps people recognise their interests as well as their abilities. Choosing a profession is one of the most concrete results of this recognition. However, vocational counselling should not be seen only as a technical guidance activity. Questions such as how a person should be educated and how they can realise themselves are directly related to philosophy of education. The purpose of this study is to examine vocational counselling within the framework of philosophy of education. National and international literature was reviewed. First, the basic aims of education were discussed critically from a philosophical perspective. Then, the relationship between guidance and counselling during vocational orientation, vocational development, and important points in choosing a profession were examined. The study emphasises that vocational counselling is an educational process which helps people recognise their potential, develop their abilities and make conscious choices. Therefore, it argues that vocational counselling needs a philosophical foundation.

Keywords Philosophy, philosophy of education, vocational counselling, vocational guidance, career choice.

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Introduction

The abilities that people have from birth do not always develop by themselves. For this reason, education is one of the basic needs in human life. According to Kant, people should gradually develop their natural abilities through their own efforts (Çilingir & Küçükali, 2004). In this sense, education is an important and necessary process. Human beings become human through education (Pamuk, 2018). Animals continue their lives and find their direction through instincts. Human beings, however, tend to learn how to control their actions. Therefore, educators, thinkers and philosophers give importance to discipline. Discipline limits animal impulses and helps people move away from a primitive condition, independently of laws (Giesinger, 2012). In Kant's approach, the misuse or absence of discipline may cause more serious results than problems in teaching knowledge and skills. A lack of knowledge can be partly corrected later. However, it is much more difficult to make up for discipline that was not developed at an early age (Kant, 2017). According to Kant, the main aim of education is to move people from their animal nature towards a higher moral condition (Çilingir & Küçükali, 2004). Knowledge and skills gained through education also prepare the basis for a future profession. Therefore, it is important to provide young generations with educational opportunities consciously from an early age.

The philosophical meaning of education is also connected with definitions in educational sciences. According to a common definition in Turkish literature, education is the process of producing intended changes in human behaviour through experience (Ertürk, 2013; Yağcı et al., 2016). This definition shows that education is a planned and purposeful activity. It mainly explains education through observable actions. Philosophy of education, on the other hand, tries to give meaning to the basic foundations, concepts and problems of education (Günay, 2019). In this context, it asks why education is provided and what kind of person it aims to develop. At first, these two perspectives seem to complete each other. One explains how education takes place, while the other explains why it takes place. Education is a continuous process in human life. Knowledge, skills and values are passed from one generation to another (Ültanır, 2003). However, this transfer is not simply repeating the past. People combine old and new ideas and create a new cultural situation (Şahin, 2019). In this way, education considers personal, social and vocational development together. During this process, developing a person's sensitivity is important as well as intellectual development (Özbal & Aydoğan, 2017).

Today, scientific and technological developments are rapidly changing professions. New occupations appear, and the qualifications needed in existing professions also change. Working life sometimes includes uncertainty and unexpected situations. In this context, Savickas and colleagues (2009) emphasise that a career is not a fixed path decided by only one choice. People may need to rebuild their careers throughout life. Therefore, changing jobs, receiving education again or losing a job may happen at different periods of life. Career development is

considered a dynamic and continuous process shaped by work and life experiences (Spurk et al., 2019). For this reason, career guidance is included in lifelong learning policies in many countries (OECD, 2004). In Türkiye, vocational guidance and career counselling have become more important with globalisation (Yeşilyaprak, 2019, p. 73). The fast spread of information among people also creates information confusion. People may find it difficult to reach reliable information in this complexity. As a result, the need for counsellors who provide correct information together with its sources is increasing.

Although vocational counselling seems to be only a field of psychological counselling, it is also related to philosophy. Counselling theories are based on answers given to the question of what a human being is (Topses, 2012, p. 94). Philosophical counselling brings this question directly into practice. This approach, started by Gerd Achenbach in Germany in 1981, argues that many problems in life have a philosophical character (Altunbaşak, 2019). Career choice is actually one of these processes. A profession is not only a way of earning a living. It is also part of a person's identity and purpose in life. What a person values and how they want to realise themselves are important factors in this choice. Philosophical counselling takes philosophy beyond an abstract epistemic field and makes it an applied field which searches for answers to practical problems of everyday life (Staicu, 2019). A counsellor does not give ready-made answers. Philosophical counselling creates an opportunity for people to examine their own thoughts and values and develop a consistent philosophy of life (Sandu, 2018). In this respect, it is similar to Kant's ideal of a person who has epistemic autonomy and can use their own reason (Kant, 2013).

In this framework, philosophical counselling and vocational guidance have some common aims. They help people become aware of their knowledge, expectations, interests and abilities, and choose a suitable profession. A student who does not receive counselling may select a profession only according to examination scores and rankings. In such a choice, interests and abilities remain in the background. Every profession requires some personal and physical characteristics and a certain period of education. Choosing a profession suitable for personal characteristics may contribute to future satisfaction and success. A comprehensive review covering nearly sixty years of research shows that the match between vocational interests and work affects job performance (Nye et al., 2012). In recent years, external factors such as high income and professional prestige have become more important for some people. However, according to self-determination theory, factors based on external rewards support well-being less than intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Choices that are not based on self-knowledge may later cause job dissatisfaction. Therefore, vocational counselling should examine personal characteristics, requirements of professions and factors affecting motivation together.

Studies in this field in Türkiye are mostly based on psychological theories. When postgraduate theses are examined, social cognitive career theories are found to be dominant (Çarkıt, 2019). In vocational guidance, group guidance

programmes which aim to support career adaptability are also common (Dönmezoğulları & Yeşilyaprak, 2019). Studies focusing on the philosophical dimension of vocational counselling are limited. However, career choice is a decision related to the question of what kind of person someone wants to become. This decision needs philosophical questioning as well as psychological processes. The aim of this study is to examine vocational counselling in the framework of philosophy of education. Accordingly, the relationship between counselling and vocational guidance, vocational development and the issues to consider when choosing a profession are discussed through the literature. The study is expected to offer a new perspective by bringing a philosophical dimension to vocational counselling.

Principles of Guidance in Vocational Counselling

A profession is a field of work through which people earn their living by using knowledge and skills gained from education. In English, the concepts of profession and occupation are used. A profession is defined as a continuous field of service or work in which a person spends effort throughout life and follows legal and ethical rules (Özgüven, 2016, p. 2). A profession is not only a means of meeting economic needs. It also shapes personal identity, social status and quality of life. Satisfaction gained in working life indirectly affects life in general. However, failure and dissatisfaction at work may threaten mental health and cause unhappiness (Eryılmaz & Mutlu, 2017). Therefore, qualified vocational counsellors are needed to guide people towards occupations suitable for their abilities and in which they may be happy.

Historically, the foundations of vocational guidance began with the Vocational Bureau established by Frank Parsons in 1908 (Parsons, 1909). For this reason, Parsons is known as the founder of this movement. In Türkiye, these services began in the 1950s to guide people towards higher education by considering their main interests and abilities (Ercan, 2019). Today, in many countries, especially Finland, students can benefit from guidance and counselling regardless of their age and level of education (Bakioğlu & Elverdi, 2016). Therefore, school counsellors and guidance teachers have important responsibilities (Akay et al., 2019). Giving correct information and guidance to both students and their families is one of the main conditions for a healthy counselling process.

Today, technological developments and rapid modernisation bring important changes in many areas of social life. With industrialisation, employment areas have increased and become more diverse. One of the clearest results of this change is seen in occupations. In a period when the number of occupations is said to approach fifty thousand and each known occupation includes different specialisations (Özgüven, 2016), counsellors need to know professions closely. Motivation is also one of the most important factors for professional success and happiness. When people like their work, their motivation and productivity increase (Çetin & Aşkun, 2018). Another point should not be ignored. Ergonomics, which aims to arrange working conditions according to people's characteristics rather than

forcing people to adapt to work conditions, is also a result of these changes (Deste & Berber, 2018, p. 80). This has become a field which directly affects employee productivity.

Considering these changes and developments, vocational counselling and guidance have become necessary for both individuals and society. Sometimes people make important career decisions alone and without enough information. This may negatively affect both their future and the social workforce. Research shows that vocational maturity begins to develop at an early age and that people make career choices during this developmental process (Akbalık, 2019). This finding shows that vocational counselling should start earlier, not only during university applications. In working life, the need for professional career counsellors is also increasing in order to choose suitable employees, train them and improve productivity (Balcı, 2019). Since career choice is a long and costly process, making a correct decision is important. Some criteria should be considered for effective guidance. First, personal interests, abilities and behaviours should be identified objectively through vocational tests. Second, technological opportunities should be used to examine alternatives, including AI-related professions that may become important in the future. Third, the match between the requirements of a profession and the person's capacity should be evaluated. Priority should be given to professions that fit personal characteristics.

When all these criteria are considered, a chosen profession may help a person gain satisfaction and realise their potential. However, strong parental influence and the attraction of popular professions are also important reasons for unsuitable career choices today. Research shows that families strongly affect career choices, but their expectations do not always match the person's abilities and interests (Esen, 2019, p. 408). In this situation, the vocational counsellor should consider both the family and the person's unique abilities. In short, one of the main principles of vocational counselling is that the final decision about a profession must always belong to the person (Turan & Kayıkçı, 2019). By using modern approaches to career planning, the counsellor should encourage people to examine the reasons behind their choices and manage the process according to their own conditions (Karacan Özdemir, 2018). The counsellor is a guide who makes the process easier. They help people choose a suitable profession but do not decide for them. It is difficult for a person who does not meet the psychological and physical requirements of a profession to become successful and happy in that work. Therefore, vocational counselling covers a wide period from primary school to university and working life. Since vocational development continues throughout life, counselling support should be planned to cover this whole process.

The Place of Vocational Development in Education

Historically, vocational development has been shaped according to the workforce needs of societies. In earlier periods, people tended to continue occupations they knew and observed in their environment. However, with industrialisation,

choosing a profession became more complex. Geographical, economic, psychological and social factors became part of this process. Developmental theories explain career choice as a process beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood (Eryılmaz & Mutlu, 2017). Vocational maturity also develops from early ages through stages which complete each other (Akbalık, 2019).

From the perspective of philosophy of education, it is accepted that every person is born with different hereditary and environmental characteristics (Demirel, 2019). These individual differences directly affect career choice. Career development is shaped not only by internal characteristics but also by the social and occupational conditions in which people live (Spurk et al., 2019). Therefore, vocational counselling should consider personality, life development and occupational identity together (Schreiber et al., 2018). Choosing a profession does not only mean entering a certain job. It is also an important decision about what kind of life a person will live.

For this reason, it is useful to identify interests, abilities and personality characteristics at an early age in order to provide correct guidance. Guidance which ignores skills and interests may lead to professional failure. Research clearly shows that school guidance services have an important influence on career choice (Turan & Kayıkçı, 2019, p. 15). Guiding people towards fields suitable for their interests and abilities makes learning easier and increases job satisfaction. This also shows the important role of counselling services during career choice (Atli & Gür, 2019). Philosophical and vocational counselling should be offered at every stage of education. For this reason, philosophical counselling should not be limited only to educational institutions.

At many stages of life, people need counselling services for their vocational development. School psychological counsellors have an important responsibility in this process (Akay et al., 2019). Group intervention programmes are also important approaches which support career adaptability (Dönmezoğulları & Yeşilyaprak, 2019). Having correct information about professions makes it easier to make decisions according to personality characteristics. In short, vocational development is an effective counselling process which is directly related to the basic principles of philosophy of education and shapes quality of life.

Career Choice and Guidance

People make many choices throughout their lives. Career choice is one of the most important of these decisions. The chosen profession directly influences the person's social environment, living conditions and attitudes (Özcan & Eranıl, 2018). Choosing a profession suitable for abilities and interests may bring success. Working in a field that a person does not like may cause low productivity and unhappiness. Many factors affect career choice. These include academic achievement, special abilities, working discipline, family socioeconomic situation, geographical characteristics of the place of residence, interests and skills (Özgüven, 2016).

Besides personal factors, global economic conditions and the labour market also play an important role in career choice. Occupations which are popular today

may become less important in the future. Therefore, people should consider long-term developments rather than only current conditions (Spurk et al., 2019). It is not correct to reduce social success to examination achievement. Ignoring the different abilities of people is against the principle of equal opportunity in education (Ergün, 2019, p. 12). Research shows that self-efficacy is an important variable supporting career adaptability during vocational guidance (Ambiel et al., 2018). Setting realistic goals for the future and working with determination are main conditions of a successful career journey.

The practical approach which gives priority to professions with high economic income also affects preparation for university. Fields offering high financial returns become important in choices, while personal interests and abilities remain in the background. Sometimes parents want to realise through their children the professional goals they could not achieve themselves. In this situation, children's interests and tendencies may be ignored (Esen, 2019). Career choices are shaped not only by family expectations but also by the expectations of peers, acquaintances and close relatives. People may have understandable reasons for thinking in this way, because their environment and living conditions influence them (Canan, 2016). Professions chosen mainly because of external pressure may lead people into fields they do not like and negatively affect career success. However, occupational identity gains meaning when it is connected with the person's unique differences (Schreiber et al., 2018). The final decision about a profession should belong to the individual. Personal differences, interests and expectations should be at the centre of the decision (Çiftçi & Hırlak, 2019). Person-centred counselling plays an important role in developing an original career identity, and school guidance services directly contribute to this process (Karacan Özdemir, 2018; Turan & Kayıkçı, 2019).

Research on career anchors has found that people's views of epistemic autonomy, personal autonomy and independence directly affect job satisfaction (Çiftçi & Hırlak, 2019, p. 2385). Every profession has its own characteristics and opportunities for personal development. The difference between a person who prefers regular office hours and another who chooses freelance work may be related more to personality than ability. Therefore, the match between personality and profession affects job satisfaction and happiness in life (Çırpan et al., 2019). In addition, fields such as journalism, media and publishing may develop faster and offer more job opportunities in large cities. People who work with intrinsic motivation also show higher job performance (Çetin & Aşkun, 2018). In short, progressing in a profession in which a person finds meaning increases both personal happiness and social benefit.

Discussion

This study evaluated vocational counselling in the context of philosophy of education from conceptual and practical perspectives. The findings show that vocational counselling is not limited to helping people choose a career. It is also a

field connected with philosophical counselling, the search for meaning, identity development and views about life. Therefore, vocational counselling has a wider scope than only practical guidance.

The main issue of this study is the nature and principles of vocational development. In line with the findings of Eryılmaz and Mutlu (2017) and Akbalık (2019), vocational development is an active process which begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. This finding shows that counselling given only at one point is not enough. People need continuous and comprehensive support which considers their developmental stages (Spurk et al., 2019). Defining vocational development only as finding a job or having a profession ignores its developmental side. Since careers develop together with personal growth and identity, counselling should consider this whole process.

The role of individual differences in career choice is another issue in the discussion. Studies about human nature and education also state that every person should be considered according to their unique characteristics (Demirel, 2019). Connecting social success only with examination achievement ignores individual differences and the unique nature of human beings. Moreover, people with low self-efficacy may avoid vocational guidance services. This may negatively affect career adaptability and vocational maturity (Ambiel et al., 2018). Choosing a profession suitable for personal interests and skills also influences life satisfaction (Schreiber et al., 2018). These findings strongly show that vocational counselling should use a holistic and comprehensive approach. Instead of ignoring differences, counsellors should be sensitive to each person's unique characteristics. This is necessary both practically and ethically.

Career choice is affected by social expectations as well as personal expectations. Parental intervention, economic concerns and pressure from the social environment may cause personal interests and abilities to remain in the background (Esen, 2019). This shows that vocational counselling cannot be considered only an individual process. It should be planned as a multidimensional support process involving family and social environment. Guidance given without knowing the person may sometimes cause job dissatisfaction, early burnout and loss of motivation. Career planning interviews, however, are an effective technique for developing an original career identity (Karacan Özdemir, 2018).

Another important point of this study is the perspective that philosophical counselling brings to vocational guidance. Sandu (2018) states that philosophical counselling helps people examine their values in detail. Staicu (2019) also shows that this process strengthens the relationship people establish with themselves. Career choice is essentially a philosophical decision. During this process, people decide not only which occupation they will choose but also what kind of life they want to live. This view is similar to Kant's (2013) ideal of a person who can use their own reason. In this sense, philosophical counselling and vocational counselling meet each other. Philosophical counselling helps people shape their philosophy of life and improve their career choices. Including philosophical questioning in counselling allows people to make career decisions based not only on economic expectations but also on meaning and values.

The role of educational institutions is another important part of the findings. School guidance services strongly affect career choice, and psychological counsellors and guidance teachers have important responsibilities (Akay et al., 2019; Turan & Kayıkçı, 2019). Group intervention programmes also support career adaptability in a practical way (Dönmezoğulları & Yeşilyaprak, 2019). However, counselling limited only to school is not sufficient. Individual approaches can help overcome this limitation (Karacan Özdemir, 2018). Planning vocational support together with families and the social environment also improves its effectiveness (Esen, 2019). The contribution of schools is not limited to giving information. Schools should also provide an environment which supports self-understanding and vocational development.

Overall, this study shows that philosophy of education and vocational counselling cannot be considered separately. Knowing who one is helps give meaning to the choice of a profession. Approaches which see a profession only as an economic resource ignore the unity of human life and the search for meaning. Therefore, a philosophical dimension in vocational counselling makes it more than technical guidance and supports the development of the whole person. Future studies which develop models combining philosophical and vocational counselling may contribute to the field.

Recommendations

Vocational counselling and guidance should be reorganised to consider people's abilities, expectations, interests, strengths and weaknesses together. Standardised assessment tools should be only one part of this process. They should be supported by qualified interviews about people's search for meaning, values and future expectations. Philosophical counselling should be combined with career guidance. Philosophical tools which examine personal identity and expectations from life should be used effectively during counselling. In this context, guidance teachers and psychological counsellors should receive in-service training and professional development in philosophical counselling. Families should have a supportive role rather than deciding the career choice. Awareness activities for parents should help reduce family pressure and strengthen people's ability to make decisions with epistemic autonomy. An individualised counselling approach based on each client's characteristics should become a basic principle.

Career awareness activities should be included systematically in the curriculum from primary school and continue throughout the career choice process. Professions should be introduced at every educational level with content suitable for students' ages. Guidance teachers, classroom teachers and philosophical counsellors should work together in this process. Career-focused guidance in educational institutions should be strengthened through group intervention programmes and individual career interviews. A flexible counselling approach sensitive to different student profiles should be adopted. In short, applied models combining philosophy of education and vocational counselling should be

developed and given priority in academic studies. Qualitative and quantitative research examining the combination of these two fields should be encouraged.

Conclusion

This study examined vocational counselling in the context of philosophy of education from conceptual and practical perspectives. The examination of guidance principles shows that vocational counselling should have psychological, epistemic and philosophical foundations. Vocational development begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. When personal and social dimensions of career choice are examined, it becomes clear that people are influenced not only by their interests and abilities but also by school, social environment and family expectations. When these findings are considered together, vocational counselling is directly related to identity development, the search for meaning and philosophy of life. Philosophical counselling and vocational counselling complete each other in this respect. The philosophical question of what a good life means is also at the centre of career choice. Counselling which encourages people to examine this question is more comprehensive than practical guidance. The results show a need for philosophically based, developmental and lifelong approaches in vocational guidance.

Guiding people towards professions suitable for their interests and abilities is necessary for both personal satisfaction and social contribution. Career choice is not only a personal decision but also a multidimensional process influenced by schools, society and families. Approaches which give priority to economic income and choices imposed by the social environment may ignore personal potential and cause job dissatisfaction. Vocational and philosophical counselling have an important role in overcoming these problems. Counselling encourages people to build a meaningful life and to be happy and productive in their careers. Therefore, counselling should not be a short-term service provided only during school years. It should be a continuous process which people can use throughout life and which is sensitive to their mental and physical development. When this approach is applied, vocational counselling will become a practice with a deeper connection to philosophy of education.

Developing vocational awareness at an early age is one of the basic conditions for conscious career choice. This process, which begins in primary education and continues throughout life, becomes stronger with consistent and continuous counselling. A person who successfully develops vocational maturity can make better decisions and build a life in harmony with themselves and their environment. Therefore, a vocational counselling approach guided by philosophy of education gives career choice a conscious and meaningful dimension. Considering philosophical counselling and vocational counselling as two connected fields creates a more comprehensive guidance approach. Since this study remains at a theoretical level, original field research is needed. Future development of practices which combine both fields will contribute to the literature.

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