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## **Title of the Paper<sup>1</sup>**

Career Development Levels of Junior High School Students in Turkey

### **Abstract:**

Although researches about the career development of children and pre-adolescents have begun to be carried out, they are not yet sufficient. The purpose of this exploratory-descriptive study was to determine the career development levels of junior high school students in Turkey. The Career Awareness Survey was undertaken with 644 Turkish junior high school students. It was observed that the junior high school students were able to associate their own characteristics with careers and knew the characteristics of careers, but their understanding of life/career implications and life/career management tasks levels were not sufficiently developed. The implications of the findings for career guidance and counseling practice are considered.

### **Key words:**

Child career development, career development, junior high school.

### **Authors and/or co-authors short biographical statement:**

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## **Paper**

Global economy requires individuals to learn about the extensive industry sector, and to prepare themselves for multiple roles. These changes in the perception of career require intervention into career training with new methods, rather than continuing to use the old ones (Baker, 2001; Luzzo and MacGregor, 2001; Saviskas, 2001; Vondracek, 2001; Blackhurst, Auger and Wahl, 2003; Feller, 2003; Guichard, 2003; Niles, 2003; Tang, 2003; Watts and Sultana, 2004; Amundson, 2005; Guichard, 2005; Gysbers, Heppner and Johnston, 2009).

It was easier to find a job and to be recruited some 200 years ago, and since the qualifications required for these professions were not that high, the educational period was also short. The Industrial Age that began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century necessitated people to have a college education, which meant the period for vocational preparation increased (Guichard, 2001). But in the last 40 years, with global economy, the rules changed again. With increased demands placed on society through living in a global economy, professions and the length of their educational periods, along with the required qualifications for employees underwent new

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changes. In order to keep pace with these changes the understanding of vocational orientation also began to change. When compared to the 1950's, the required qualifications for professions and employees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century changed (Carnevele and Desrochers, 2003; Rosenbaum and Person, 2003).

Additionally, the contribution process of the youth in the adult society changed dramatically. In the traditional vocational-decision making model, students were given information before their graduation from *high school*, and they were expected to make *long term* vocational decisions. In the traditional approach (Jarvis, 2003):

- Interests, talents, attitudes etc. of the individuals are identified,
- A comprehensive study world is explained according to the given information,
- The most appropriate profession is selected by comparing their personal attributes and the qualifications that the profession requires,
- An educational plan is made for the vocational preparation,
- The student graduates, finds a reliable job and starts to work,
- And eventually retires.

These new values and expectations dominate the world, and have dramatically influenced school guidance services, especially the career education programs. The purpose of life career management is to equip the individuals with various competencies, (knowledge, skills and approaches) so that they can make many different choices throughout both their professional lives, and in all other aspects of life (Kuzgun, 2000; Jarvis, 2003; McMahan, Patton & Tahtam, 2003; Tang, 2003). In the past, employee's vocational and technical knowledge was deemed to be satisfactory; but now quite distinct and diverse vocational skills are expected from employees. Such competencies, called *meta-competencies*, that combine learning skills and life management skills, together with the communication skills of the employees, are also required. Today, meta-competencies sought in employees are considered competencies, which can be transferred not only to the working environment of the individual, but also to all aspects of life (Jarvis, 2003; McMahan, Patton and Tahtam, 2003).

Today, although re-structuring of career education programs was initiated in many countries as a result of economic, social, and political changes and progress, these could not reach the desired level according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2004) report. With these programs it is suggested that there is a need to increase the quality of career education programs in schools, to begin the career education as early as the primary school years, and to focus on the career management skills of the students. OECD countries are attaching a rising importance to lifelong learning and active employment policies, as tools of economic growth. Effective career information and guidance systems are essential to support the implementation of these policies, and all citizens need to develop the skills to self-manage their careers.

In order to bring common strategies into education, an action plan was prepared during the 2000 European Union ministers of education summit in Lisbon to introduce a newly structured educational standard for EU members, and candidate states, and to give them a competitive position until 2010. The aim of the Lisbon strategy is to modernise the educational system of the EU, and to establish a more competitive knowledge base and developed economy. EU members, and candidate states now use the decisions determined in Lisbon to lay down a common set of educational objectives. Furthermore, during this conference the ministers responsible for education, as well as the ministers for instruction and youth, convened and worked on the issue of "Lifelong Education". The discussion of the ministers was concentrated on the below mentioned subjects, categorised under 4 working groups (MEB, n.d.):

- European strategy for lifelong education
- Renovation and efficiency in the organisation of activities for education, instruction and youth
- Efficient use of social harmony and citizenship
- Mobility, adaptation and recruitment

Subject changes, which take place in many countries due to the effect of having a global economy, influenced the Turkish educational system similar to the changes in other countries. Primarily beginning in the 1990s, a discussion took place in Turkey regarding the education of technology-friendly, problem solving, the ability to make autonomous decisions, and internationally competitive employees who were capable of producing high quality goods and services. This led to a re-structuring process in the Turkish educational system being initiated on a large scale. Up to now, the most significant aim of school guidance services, which started to take part in the educational system in 1950s' Turkey, is the vocational orientation of the students. After the foundation of Republic of Turkey in 29 October 1923, research for educational reforms was accelerated. For the success of the students, the teachers were given an obligatory duty of guiding students in 1939 primary school curriculum and in 1948 secondary school curriculum (Nazlı, 2008).

Data showed that as a result of Turk – American relations in the 50's, guidance and counseling area has been integrated into Turkish education system. In councils and regulations of education of the 60's, it was observed that the service of guidance and counseling was adopted and its importance was well-understood. Turkey entered a period of planned development in the 60's. Importance of school guidance services, need for school guidance services in orienting the pupil towards careers was emphasized in the developmental plans. First Five Year Development Plan (1963-1967) stipulated to take the personal talents into account and educate individuals accordingly. In the Second Five Year Development Plan (1968-1972) more importance was attached on guidance services, the plan also focused on juvenile problems and on assistance for their career orientation. Period between 1970-1979 was again marked by the active environment of guidance services. Our educational system in the 70's mostly depended on the occupational and technical training so as to create the work force Industrial Age requires. In the 70's traditional guidance model based primary school guidance implementations started and teachers were particularly commissioned for this service. High schools were re-structured in the 70's and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade was tailored to orientate students to careers. In the 80's school counselor trainings started and they were given more responsibility in the schools. However, in 80's school guidance implementations were highly criticized and it was seen that school implementations did not meet the needs of the society. In the 90's a re-structuring period of guidance and counseling began in the schools and the implementation process of comprehensive guidance and counseling program was initiated. In 2000, transfer process into comprehensive guidance and counseling program continued with impetus and primary school implementations were completed with success (Nazlı, 2008).

The Ministry of Education prepared the Orientation Guidelines for junior high schools in 2003, and started to suggest that 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders should aspire to a high school education based upon their performances. During the 2005-2006 educational year, the “classroom guidance intervention” was included in the junior high school academic program of K-8 graders, and a special importance was given to career planning skills. In time, the career developments of junior high school students were supported by extra curricular activities such as introduction to professions club. Guidance work in high schools through one-to-one interview was also recently supported by a curriculum-based approach. In addition to one hour classroom guidance intervention, a 2 hour “career choice” class was scheduled in

order to orientate the students towards vocational schools. The influence of the global economy, and its effects on the Development Plan and Education Council meetings, increased when the subject concerned the developed policies that influence the Turkish educational system and school guidance services. Under the framework of the Ninth Development Plan covering the years between 2007 and 2013, a Turkey vision was adopted that entails a stabilized, growing, revenue sharing, and globally competitive country. Such a Turkey would have completed the European Union membership harmonisation process, and be capable of being transferred into an information society. New policies were developed at the 17<sup>th</sup> National Education Council meeting that allow for a transition between the educational levels, globalisation, and the EU process (13-27 November 2006). In this council meeting, the agenda items included students' education at a competitive level during the EU process, re-organisation of high schools, better vocational orientation, and an increase of compulsory education up to 12 years (Nazlı, 2008).

### ***Career Development in Childhood***

Career development clearly begins during childhood (Rohrs, 1992; Emmett, 1997; Lapan, Adams, Turner and Hinkelman, 2000; Magnuson and Starr, 2000; McIntosh, 2000; Kuzgun, 2000; Yeşilyaprak, 2000; Vondracek, 2001; Blackhurst, Auger and Wahl, 2003; Guichard, 2003, Ültanır, 2003; Watson and McMahon, 2004; Auger, Blackhurst and Wahl, 2005; Hartung et al., 2005; Goodman and Hansen, 2005; McMahon and Watson, 2005; Nazlı, 2007). The different stages of childhood and adolescence are regarded as the years of preparation for adulthood (Onur, 1987; Aydın, 1999; Yeşilyaprak, 2000; Arı, 2003; Aydın, 2004). During this period, which covers primary school and junior high school, swift changes occur in the physical, intellectual, sentimental and social developmental areas of a child. Havighurts (1964) states that one of the developmental tasks of this period is to become prepared for a profession. Children and pre-adolescents should make some decisions about their future professions while preparing for the future. According to Erikson (1968), when children start school they begin to interact with the social environment outside of their home. A child who interacts with adults and peers begins to discover the world of adults, and subsequently begins to prepare for it. The discovery of the social environment and of self continues swiftly during the years of junior high school (Bacanlı, 2000; Yeşilyaprak, 2000).

Studies on the professional interests of children, their perception of themselves, and their association with careers. It was found that career conscience develops in primary school students, they are able to associate their own characteristics with the careers (Trice and King, 1991; Magnuson and Starr, 2000; Walls, 2000; Helwig, 2001; Blackhurst, Auger and Wahl, 2003; Taylor, 2003; Auger, Blackhurst and Wahl, 2005; Palladino-Schultheiss, Palma and Manzi, 2005; Nazlı, 2007) they are able to evaluate the careers in a more realistic way during junior high school years, they are able to associate their own characteristics with careers, and relate careers to the education (Morton, 1997; Helwig, 1998a; Helwig, 2001; Auger, Blackhurst and Wahl, 2005). In recent studies it was also discovered that gender (Morton, 1997; Bobo, Hildreth and Durodoye, 1998; Francis, 1998; Helwig, 1998a; Creed, Prideaux and Patton, 2005), family (Schulenberg, Wondracek and Crouter, 1984; Seligman, Weinstock and Owings, 1988; Seligman, Weinstock and Heflin, 1991; Young, Frieser and Dillabough, 1991; Penick and Jepsen, 1992; Trice and Knapp, 1992; Middleton and Loughhead, 1993; Young, 1994; Helwig, 1998b; Turner and Lapan, 2002; Huges and Thomas, 2003; Gibson, 2005; Vignoli et al., 2005; Bryant, Zvonkovic and Reynolds, 2006) and socio-economic environment (Cook et al., 1996; Post, Williams and Brubaker, 1996; Weinger, 1998; Armstrong and Crombie, 2000; Bandura et al., 2001; Hartung, 2002) all have a profound effect on the career development of children and adolescents.

### ***The Purpose of This Study***

Although researches about the career development of children and pre-adolescents have begun to be carried out, they are not yet sufficient (Dagley and Salter, 2003; Hartung et al., 2005; Watson and McMahon, 2005). In order to prepare our children for changeable economic circumstances, the characteristics of career development should be known in advance for this period. Today, although re-structuring of career education programs was initiated in many countries as a result of economic, social, and political changes and progress, these could not reach the desired level according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004) report. With these programs it is suggested that there is a need to increase the quality of career education programs in schools, and to focus on the *career management skills* of the students. OECD countries are attaching a rising importance to lifelong learning, and active employment policies, as tools of economic growth (OECD, 2004; Watts and Sultana, 2004).

Turkey, as an OECD member and European Member candidate, has a young and dynamic human resource that makes it the most important competitive force against other countries. Turkey, with its 70 million population, 70% of which is below the age of 35, and 50% of which is below the age of 20 (Türk İstatistik Kurumu, 2008) is expected to produce new and efficient education policies. It is crucial to optimize the educational opportunities in order to create competent human power. Efficient career training programs should be implemented in order to create chances for the Turkish human resource to work abroad in global markets. Therefore, career education programs need to be prepared in harmony with the students' required development levels.

This study aims to determine the career development level of junior high school students in Turkey. Furthermore, career development levels were studied among junior high school students in terms of grades and gender in order to recognize any differences.

### **Method**

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. 644 junior high school students from 14 schools in three provinces participated in the study. The students were aged between 11 and 14 years, with a mean age of 12.6 year (SD=.87).

The Career Awareness Survey developed by Gillies, McMahon and Carroll was used in the study (McMahon & Watson, 2005). Descriptive statistics were reported, including the mean of responses per participant, and the frequency of responses under each code for the total sample, as well as for gender and grade level. Furthermore, the career development levels of the students were examined to spot any differences in terms of their gender and grade levels.

### **Findings**

This study determined that the Turkish junior high school students were able to associate their own characteristics with careers, and that they knew about the careers, but their life/career implications and life/career management levels were not sufficiently developed. In terms of gender, the female students were discovered to be better than the male students in two categories, however no differences were found between the other two categories. No differences

were discovered among the career development levels of students according to grade levels (Table-1).

**Table-1**

**Numerical Analysis of 644 Students Regarding Themes Based on for Total Sample, Gender, and Grade Levels**

Codes	Total		Gender				Grade Levels					
			Female		Male		6th Graders		7th Graders		8th Graders	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Interests and personal characteristics	552	85	313	92	239	78**	168	85	242	87	127	74
Life/career implications	265	41	149	44	116	37	87	44	116	41	62	36
Life/career management tasks	96	14	61	18	35	11	18	9	57	20	21	12
Nature of work	356	55	206	60	150	49*	103	52	167	60	88	51

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

Research data showed that the career development levels of the high school students in Turkey were not found to be at the desired level, and that this fact revealed some similarities to their international peers (Helwig, 1998a, 2001; Hartung, 2005; McMahan and Watson, 2005; Walls, 2000). More time should be devoted to the field of career development in Turkey's school guidance programs, and these programs should also focus on the development of life/career management, and life/career implication skills, along with individual and vocational characteristics. School counsellors may assist the students by introducing web sites, and they themselves can add to their existing knowledge about careers from the use of these resources. Teachers should also present auxiliary activities in the classrooms to help the students associate the things they learn along with the career knowledge.

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