

Part 2

School Counseling Education & Training

A Comparative Study of Pre-service School Counselor Education between Australia, Malta, and Turkey

Ayşen Köse, Marilyn Campbell & Ruth Falzon

Abstract

The goal of this study was to provide a descriptive comparison of pre-service school counselor education systems in Australia, Malta, and Turkey. We defined pre-service school counselor education as the range of compulsory training activities in which school counselor candidates have to complete before entering the profession. This paper investigated four main issues: the minimum formal educational qualifications required to enter training as a school counselor in the three countries; the core activities which candidates need to complete, such as field-based experience, practicums, internships as well as formal course work; the entry requirements for work ready participation, such as licensure, certificate, or examination; and any specializations required in the training for school counselors. To compare the education in the three different countries we used qualitative comparative methodology with nationally defined entry qualifications to the school counseling profession, as well as policy documents from selected school counselor training institutions. We found some similarities but many differences in the three countries in preparing candidates for school counseling. These findings can be used to inform other countries to adopt more efficient and effective practices for the education of school counselors and learn from one another to improve the quality of training so that candidates can be better prepared to assist our young people in schools to lead rich and fulfilling lives.

Keywords: school counseling, training, Australia, Malta, Turkey

Introduction

Research has shown that school counselors make many positive contributions which benefit all stakeholders in the school community (Carrell & Hoekstra, 2014; Cronin, 2018; Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012; Shi & Brown, 2020). The presence of such professionals with expertise in many areas is extremely valuable especially for students who face complex problems in the modern world. Thus, it is important that

school counselors receive a quality education and training themselves to be able to perform these duties. It has been shown that pre-service training determines professional competencies and many personal traits such as self-efficacy and motivation later on in the real work setting (e.g., Goodman-Scott, Upton & Colburn, 2020; Slaten et al., 2013; Springer, 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a descriptive comparison of pre-service school counselor education systems in Australia, Malta, and Turkey. To compare school counselor education we used a qualitative comparative methodology with nationally defined entry qualifications to the school counseling profession, as well as policy documents from selected school counselor training institutions. In the current study, pre-service school counselor education is defined as the range of compulsory activities in which school counselor candidates must complete before entering the work force.

This comparative analysis highlights significant differences in how school counselors are trained in the three countries. Contextual, historical, legal and regulatory issues all impact on the training of these school professionals. The context of education, the different job descriptions of school counselors, the legal and regulatory bodies are first described for each country to enable the reader to place the different training requirements in context. The paper then addresses entry requirements into counselor training programs and into the profession, explains any specialization that is provided in school counseling, and finally discusses the similarities and differences in the training of school counselors in the three countries.

Context of education in the three countries

Before comparing training programs for school counselors, it is important to understand the different demographics and contexts of education of the three countries.

Australia

Australia is a vast continent, with more than 85% of the population of 25 million living within 50 kilometers of the coastline. However, in the largest geographical states of Western Australia and Queensland, there are many rural and remote schools. To understand education in Australia, one needs to understand that Australia is divided into six states (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania) and two territories (the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory). Schooling is a state and territory government responsibility. This is because when schooling became compulsory, there was no federation of states but rather separate colonies (Campbell & Colmar, 2014). This partly explains why school counseling and the subsequent training for school counselors can be so different in different state systems.

Malta

Malta is a southern European Union (EU) Mediterranean archipelago, where the two main inhabited islands are Malta and Gozo. It is 80 km south of Sicily, 284 km east of Tunisia and 333 km north of Libya. With an area of 316 km² and a population of just over 450,000, Malta is globally one of the smallest and most densely populated states. For most inhabitants (90%) Maltese is their mother tongue, whilst the rest are either totally English speaking, bi-lingual or use Maltese and English interchangeably (Brincat, 2005; Camilleri, 1996). Significant migration from within the EU and from Northern and Eastern Europe, Africa and lately Italy, Sicily, Nepal and the Philippines, have contributed to a significant increase in population, new cultures and languages (DeBattista, 2016; del Peso Sánchez, 2015).

Turkey

Turkey is a large peninsula located at the meeting point of Asia and Europe. As of 2019, Turkey's population was over 83 million with a median age of 32,4 years (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2019). K-12 school-aged children comprise almost 22% of the total population (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2020). Education is compulsory until the 12th grade, although pre-school education is not. Schooling is a national government's responsibility and the education system in Turkey is highly centralized. The Ministry of National Education is the highest government agency in charge of K-12 education.

Job description of school counselors

Australia

School counselor roles in Australian states are broadly similar (Faulkner, 2007). In general, the role of the school counselor is to assist students, teachers, parents, and school communities to enable students to fulfil their academic potential while maintaining good mental health and wellbeing by using preventative, proactive and reactive strategies. The role seems to be continually expanding to assist students with mental health concerns, assess students with learning difficulties and disabilities, provide behavior management strategies to teachers and parents, provide psychological assessment, career advice, information and counseling and professional development for teachers and colleagues (Campbell & Colmar, 2014).

Malta

Maltese state schools are grouped into ten colleges. Each college has one middle, one secondary and a number of primary schools. Maltese school counselors fulfill five main roles: (1) running a Guidance and Counseling Services in all the schools within a college; (2) communicating on a regular basis with the service manager on issues of guidance and counseling; (3) providing career guidance; (4) collaborating with the heads of schools and staff regarding students' profile of needs

and abilities; and (5) referring to other specialised services. Counselors are also expected to work towards the implementation of the school development plan and school mission, together with other stakeholders (Cauchi et al., 2017). Students also have access to other professionals such as career advisors, youth workers, social workers and guidance teachers.

Turkey

The role and functions of school counselors in Turkey is defined by the Ministry of Education (2020). Based on this regulation, the roles of school counselors are threefold: (1) developmental and preventive services (e.g., supports classroom teachers in implementing classroom guidance programs; teaches students to know themselves better; shares the information with students in the areas of social-emotional, academic, and career development through individual studies, group work, or publications); (2) remedial services (e.g., conducts group and individual counseling with the students at risk; refers to other specialized experts); and (3) support services (e.g., consults the teachers, families, administrators, and other agencies).

Regulatory bodies

The three countries present significantly different regulation strategies as noted below. Such differences also reflect historical and cultural differences, and what influences the development of counseling in schools in each country.

Australia

In most of Australia, registration as a psychologist and a teacher is needed to become a school counselor, although there are exceptions in some states. The psychology profession is regulated by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act which applies to each state and territory of Australia. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is the national organization responsible for implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme across Australia. AHPRA works with 15 National Boards (of which the Psychology Board is one) to help protect the public by regulating Australia's registered health practitioners. Teacher registration is governed by a Board in each state.

Malta

In 2015, counseling in Malta became a registered profession regulated by the national government (Counselling Profession Act, 2015) with a national Council of the Counselling Profession whose main remit is to issue warrants. The Law (Counselling Profession Act, 2015) details that entrance into the profession requires master's level training (Cauchi et al., 2017).

Turkey

Psychological counseling is not a registered profession in Turkey. There are no specific laws or regulations for counselors or psychologists, not even a framework law covering all professions providing mental health services. The roles and duties of school counselors are regulated by the regulations of the Ministry of National Education. However, since there is no law for mental health professionals, the criteria for appointing a school counselor are sometimes changed by the Education Ministry as the Ministry tends to see school psychological counselors as teachers rather than as mental health workers.

Minimum entry requirements for school counselor training

Australia

Entry to a psychology six-year program (four years undergraduate and two years postgraduate) and/or a bachelor of teaching (four years) in Australia is usually by way of a good score on a candidate's final exams after Year 12 at school.

Malta

To enter school counselor training in Malta, candidates must have a university bachelor degree, and one year's experience working in a human or psycho-social setting if reading one of the two master's available.

Turkey

Guidance and psychological counseling undergraduate programs accept students based on a two-staged central examination held by the HEC's Center for Student Selection and Placement (CSSP). Therefore, getting enough points from the centrally managed, highly competitive national university entrance exam is the first step in entering the school counseling profession (Korkut, 2007).

Training programs

Australia

In Australia, the training program is a four-year sequence of study in psychology at a university as this is a requirement of the Psychology Board of Australia (PBA) followed by a two-year internship or a Master's degree (PBA, n.d.). For the state of Queensland, there is a difference as school counselors need to be registered teachers and then study at post graduate level in the discipline of guidance and counseling, or the six year psychology program (Queensland Department of Education, n.d.). NSW, WA, and Tas also require their school counselors to be teacher qualified (NSW Department of Education, n.d.; Tasmania Department of Education, n.d.; WA Department of Education, n.d.), although in their case it is likely to work in reverse with the psychology being the Bachelor degree and the teaching the post

graduate. Victoria also has registration requirements with PBA and APS thereby requiring the same educational requirements, however, they also permit nurses, social workers and occupational therapists to be Mental Health Practitioners (State Government of Victoria, n.d.). A practicum component is required as part of the six year psychology degree (APAC, n.d.). It is called a placement. The accreditation does not stipulate the duration of the placement. For teaching, the practicum is called field experience.

Malta

The training to be a school counselor in Malta is only available at the University of Malta which offers a four-year part-time Master of Counseling and a two-year full-time Master of Arts in Transcultural Counseling. These courses provide graduate students with an in-depth knowledge base and practice skills in professional counseling, not a specialist school counseling program. Graduates are able to use the skills to competently serve individuals, couples, families, and groups in the community. This program also promotes the professional status, identity and visibility of counselors within different cultural contexts and seeks to extend students' abilities to consider counseling within the broader social context as well as within individual client work. Both programs include a 30-ECTS dissertation and practicum hours. The Master of Arts in Transcultural Counseling is offered in collaboration with an American University (Cauchi et al., 2017).

Turkey

Training for a school counselor in Turkey is at a university standard with a practicum. However, the practicum is not standardized with which supervision methods to be used decided by the course lecturers' preference (Koçyiğit, 2020). The same situation is true for the vocational guidance practice course. These non-standardized supervision practices have been criticized in the literature (Meydan, 2014). Internship courses are however, nationally standardized by regulation in Turkey. According to this regulation, every prospective school counselor must have a documented internship experience as part of their formal undergraduate training.

Entry requirements into the profession

Australia

All states and territories require a professional registration in order to be able to be a school counselor. The majority of registrations are with the Psychology Board of Australia which sits under AHPRA. Given that this registration is required, many of the educational and practicum requirements are set by the PBA standards. Teacher registration is also essential in most states.

Malta

The Counselling Profession Act (2015) states that a candidate can apply for a permanent, a temporary, or a restricted warrant. Once students have completed their Master's programs, they can present their official transcript and can apply for a temporary warrant with the Council for the Counseling Profession (2016). This warrant is entitled "a person to be registered in the register for counselors with a temporary warrant kept by the Council who can practice the counseling profession under supervision of a counseling supervisor and according to guidelines issued by the Council" (p. 3).

To then be able to apply for a full warrant, applicants must have:

satisfied the Council that he has adequate professional training or experience in counseling for an aggregate period of not less than two years on a full-time basis, or has performed one thousand (1,000) hours of work under the supervision of a counseling supervisor, whichever is attained first, or the equivalent to that period on a part-time of not more than six years, after obtaining the Master's degree, or recognised degree... provided that when the person who is practicing the counseling profession on a part time basis does not perform one thousand (1,000) hours of supervised counseling under the supervision of a counseling supervisor within six (6) years, he may request the Council to be granted an extension of the said time. (pp. 3-4)

Turkey

In Turkey, currently there are no licensure or certification regulations for school counselors. However, if the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Program graduates want to be employed at K-12 public schools, they have to take a central, standardized, and highly competitive exam called the Civil Service Personnel Selection Exam (CSPSE) which has been held biannually since 2002. Even if candidates who take the exam and get the minimum required score for the position this does not guarantee their employment since vacant positions in the public school system are much lower than the number of applicants. Since CSPSE is a generic examination for anyone who wants to work in civil service, it cannot be considered a licensure examination for the profession. School counselors working in public schools work as "candidate school counselors" in the first year of their duty. After completing their first year, they take another generic exam. When they pass it, they are entitled to work as a school counselor. Those who prefer to serve as a school counselor in private K-12 schools are not required to take any of these exams. Private schools are allowed to hire candidates based on their own criteria.

Specializations required in the training of school counselors

Australia

Most candidates for school counseling read the Master in Educational and Developmental Psychology, as well as a Bachelor or Master of Teaching. Although

there is no specialisation of training in Australia, in practice, secondary school counselors need to have at least two units or subjects in careers counseling which primary and special education school counselors do not.

Malta

Until Malta started offering Master's programs in 2008, the University of Malta only offered training specifically for school counseling and only available for teachers. The first three (2008-2016) MCouns. programs then focused on counseling but included three elective modules on health, child and adolescent, and community, of which students could choose one module. As from 2016, and to be in with the law regarding specialisations, MCouns. programs did not include these elective study units. The two Maltese masters then include content on transcultural counseling and a five-ECTS study unit on career counseling. One questions whether this module should remain in initial counseling courses or be regarded as a specialization. The specialization clause in the law (Counselling Profession Act, 2015) refers to 30-ECTS training courses and also brings into discussion what constitutes an area of specialization. In our opinion, specialization courses should be offered to all helping professionals as this would promote trans disciplinarity, role-release and teamwork, so necessary in the best interest of clients (Karol, 2014; Miller, 2016).

Turkey

There is no specialization within the counseling profession either at undergraduate or graduate level in Turkey. Therefore, there is no distinct specialty area named "School Counseling". Both the undergraduate and the graduate programs are named as "Psychological Counseling and Guidance" and give generic counseling education. However, as stated earlier, Psychological Counseling and Guidance undergraduates can be appointed as counselors in public and private schools without any other specialization and certification requirements since undergraduate programs were designed primarily to meet the workforce need for trained school counselors in the historical development of the profession (Korkut, 2007).

Discussion

School counseling is an evolving profession worldwide. Policies and practices for training school counselors also vary depending on the context of each country which all have individual strengths and aspects that are open to improvement. School counseling communities all around the world have a lot to learn from each other. That is why international comparative studies are important, as they allow us to examine what is happening in the teaching of school counseling in other countries, which in turn helps policy makers and counselor educators to understand effective ways of teaching school counseling.

The descriptions of Australian, Maltese and Turkish school counseling training in this paper show the importance of cross-cultural awareness of different realities in

the profession. Further, this diversity is influenced by how centralised or not the school, political and legal systems are in each country. For example, Australian schooling is a state and territory government responsibility, thus school counseling and the subsequent training for school counselors is different in each state, whilst Malta and Turkey have a centralised school system, where training is on the one hand independent from the government, with regard to academic but, in the case of Malta, also governed by the Counselling Profession Act (2015), as the University of Malta needs to ensure that its training respects and embraces the principles of this law.

There are different terms used for the profession in each country. In Australia, school counselor, school psychologist or guidance officer is used, in Turkey psychological counselor is preferred. In Malta, whilst the preferred informal term which is used in school is counselor, these professionals are, together with other professionals such as youth workers and social workers, officially referred to as Educational Support Practitioner (Principal, Senior or Trainee). Job roles also differ with Australian school counselors focusing on academic potential fulfilment, good mental health and career guidance through preventative, proactive and reactive strategies. Malta seems to follow the British model but the pastoral system has evolved to include Personal and Social Development (PSD) teachers, guidance teachers, career advisors and other professionals such as psycho-therapists, educational psychologists and social workers, where the Maltese school counselor works mainly with guidance teachers. Maltese PSD teachers address the preventive aspect addressed by Australian and Turkish counselors. On the other hand, like Malta, Turkish school counselors focus more on mental health than academic achievement. In this respect similar to Australian school counselors, Turkish school counselors address developmental and preventive services, group and individual counseling and consultations with other stakeholders. The job descriptions of Turkish school counselors seem to have a more similar profile to Maltese school counselors. However, the links of school counseling training to the discipline of psychology are more evident in Australia than in Malta and Turkey.

Regulatory bodies are certainly very different in each country. The three countries share the whole spectrum of possibilities with regard to regulatory bodies. Australia has a system where only psychology with teaching training is accepted for school counselors, where psychology is regulated by a national body and teaching by a state body but counseling per se is not regulated at all. On the other hand, in the Maltese context, counseling is a warranted profession (Counselling Profession Act, 2015) regulated by the Council of the Counselling Profession, which issues warrants according to the law. The Law (Counseling Profession Act, 2015) details that entrance into the profession requires master's level training in counseling (Cauchi et al., 2017). In Turkey, psychological counseling is not a warranted profession, with no law or regulation governing both psychological counselors and psychologists. The roles and duties of school counselors are then regulated by the regulations of the Ministry of

National Education and school counselors are tend to be perceived as teachers rather than mental health workers.

Counselor training in the three countries is at university post-graduate level but Turkey also offers undergraduate programs. Australia requires a minimum formal educational background in teaching and psychology. Maltese minimum entry requirements for working as a school psychologist is a Bachelor's degree in a human and/or social sciences, or an area of study deemed relevant, with MCouns. requiring one year's working experience and TCouns. no experience due to its collaboration with an American university. Turkish school counseling preparation programs are termed Guidance and Psychological Counseling.

The importance on practica (placements) is reflected in the programs of the three countries, with reference to research only present in the Maltese program and the possibility of internship programs available only in Australia and Turkey, since the Maltese masters' programs include enough hours of practice to allow for entry into the profession. Australian school counselors' accreditation requires a practicum (placement) component as part of the four-year degree of teaching and as part of the six year degree in psychology. Turkish programming is the responsibility of the Turkish Higher Education Council (THEC) up to 2020. As from the academic year 2021-2022, school counseling training programs will have institutional autonomy. This is a new development for Turkish undergraduate level school counseling training. Practica are mandated in the Turkish curriculum, but supervision is not based on any standards.

This peep into these three countries' experience of school counseling reflects the need for excellence and integrity of the profession. Further, the importance of practice seems to point towards the importance given to skills in the best interest of students. Comparative studies such as this one can be used as a means to find and extract best practices and generate a body of knowledge that may improve school counseling training. As well stated by Stigler et al. (2000) "...we may be blind to some of the most significant features that characterize teaching in our own culture because we take them for granted as the way things are and ought to be. Cross-cultural comparison is a powerful way to unveil unnoticed but ubiquitous practices." (p. 88).

References

- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) (n.d.): www.ahpra.gov.au
- Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools (APAC) (n.d.): www.apacs.org.au
- Brincat, J. M. (2005): Maltese - an unusual formula. *Macmillan English Dictionary* 27. <http://macmillan.dictionaries.com/MED-Magazine/February2005/27-LI-Maltese-print.htm>
- Camilleri, A. (1996): Language values and identities: Code switching in secondary classrooms in Malta. *Linguistics and Education*, 8(1), 85-103.
- Campbell, M. A. & Colmar, S. (2014): Current status and future trends of school counselling in Australia. *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling*, 4(2), 181-197.
- Carrell, S. E. & Hoekstra, M. (2014): Are school counselors an effective education input? *Economics Letters*, 125(1), 66-69.

- Cauchi, M., Falzon, R., Micallef, P. & Sammut, M. (2017): Policy, Research and the Development of School Counselling in Malta: Lessons Learnt in a Small-Island Community. In: Carey, J., Harris, B., Lee, S. & Aluede, O. (Eds.) *International Handbook for Policy Research on School-Based Counseling* (pp. 365-381). Cham: Springer.
- Cronin, S. (2018): Does having a school counselor matter? A dissertation investigating school counseling in Minnesota. University of Minnesota.
- DeBattista, A. P. (2016): A small-island state within a changing security climate: The case of Malta. *Symposia Melitensia*, 12, 69-86.
- del Peso Sánchez, S. (2015): The evolution of immigration discourse in the Maltese press from 2005 to 2015: A case study of the Times of Malta. Trabajo Fin de Máster, Universidad Complutense, Madrid.
- Dimmitt, C. & Wilkerson, B. (2012): Comprehensive school counseling in Rhode Island: Access to services and student outcomes. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2), 125-135.
- Faulkner, M. (2007): School psychologists or psychologists in schools? *InPsych: The Bulletin of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd*, 29(4), 10.
- Goodman-Scott, E., Upton, A. & Colburn, A. N. (2020): School counseling district supervisors' experiences and perceptions regarding school counselor preparation for practice. *Professional School Counseling*, 24(1), 1-11.
- Karol, R. L. (2014): Team models in neurorehabilitation: structure, function, and culture change. *NeuroRehabilitation*, 34(4), 655-669.
- Koçyiğit, M. (2020): An investigation of group supervision process of individual counseling practice course. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education*, 8(4), 1116-1146.
- Korkut, F. (2007): Counselor education, program accreditation and counselor credentialing in Turkey. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 29(1), 11-20.
- Meydan, B. (2014): Psikolojik danışma uygulamalarına yönelik bir süpervizyon modeli: Mikro beceri süpervizyon modeli (A supervision model for psychological counseling practices: A micro-skill supervision model). *Ege Eğitim Dergisi*, 15(2), 358-374.
- Miller, C. Z. (2016): Towards transdisciplinarity: Liminality and the transitions inherent in pluridisciplinary collaborative work. *Journal of Business Anthropology*, 2, 35-57.
- Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2020): *National Education Statistics. Formal Education 2019/ '20*. Republic of Turkey: Ministry of National Education.
- Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2020): The MoNE Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services Regulation. *Resmî Gazete*, 14 Ağustos.
- NSW Department of Education (n.d.): <https://education.nsw.gov.au>
- Psychology Board of Australia (n.d.): www.psychologyboard.gov.au
- Queensland Department of Education (n.d.): <https://education.qld.gov.au>
- Shi, Q. & Brown, M. H. (2020): School counselors' impact on school-level academic outcomes: Caseload and use of time. *Professional School Counseling*, 23(1/3), 1-8.
- Slaten, C. D., Scalise, D. A., Gutting, K. & Baskin, T. W. (2013): Early career school counselors' training perspectives: Implications for school counselor educators. *Journal of School Counseling*, 11(20), 1-34.
- Springer, S. I. (2015): Aspects of site supervision as predictors of group leader self-efficacy for pre-service school counselors. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Montclair State University.
- State Government of Victoria (n.d.): <https://www.education.vic.gov.au>
- Stigler, J. W., Gallimore, R. & Hiebert, J. (2000): Using video surveys to compare classrooms and teaching across cultures: Examples and lessons from the TIMSS video studies. *Educational Psychologist*, 35(2), 87-100.
- Tasmania Department of Education (n.d.): <https://www.education.tas.gov.au>
- Turkish Statistical Institute (2019): *Turkey in Statistics, 2019*. Republic of Turkey: Turkish Statistical Institute.
- WA Department of Education (n.d.): <https://www.education.wa.edu.au>

Author affiliation

Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayşen Köse Şirin, Yedİtepe University, Turkey

Prof. Dr. Marilyn Campbell, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane Australia

Senior Lecturer Dr. Ruth Falzon, University of Malta, Malta

Please cite this publication as:

Köse, A., Campbell, M. & Falzon, R. (2021): A Comparative Study of Pre-service School Counselor Education between Australia, Malta, and Turkey. *Comparative School Counseling*, 1, 39-50.