

# Career Counseling in Creative Economy Context: Innovative Approaches in Turkey

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**Abstract** – Aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the technology-assisted career counseling methods in Turkey and the developments related to the creative economy, which has the potential for directly affecting youth's quality of life. The use of technology in career counseling in Turkey will be discussed from a novel economical perspective that affects career orientations. In the light of technology aimed at widespread career guidance throughout the world, the opportunities offered by these developments for creative employees and the areas in which the technologies used in Turkey need to be developed further.

The main assumption behind the dissemination of vocational guidance and access to career counseling through technology is the proposed relationship between the level of knowledge acquired and the quality of career decisions. As the level of knowledge and consequently career awareness increases thanks to the communication technologies, it is thought that the individuals will make the most efficient decision and follow the right steps for their career. However, as work and professions diversifies, the volume of professional knowledge increases, and in new fields as creative industries, jobs that cannot be fully defined according to the old classification are emerging. In this case, while the information communication technologies and internet career guidance and career counseling are transformed, creative economy dynamics also transform professional life on the one hand. In all these developments, the use of technological tools is not considered sufficient in the field of vocational guidance and career counseling in Turkey. If a relationship is established between these innovative technologies and wider socio economic development, a counseling system that provides efficient service to the individuals will be established.

**Keywords** – Career Counseling, Creative Economy, Creative Work, Technology, Vocational Guidance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As the knowledge is a more distributable resource than ever recent developments in career guidance and counselling need to be handled in a wider perspective. Career counseling became an academic topic in the 20th century when the dynamics of the period was quite different than today. Rapid changes in technology and communication have a considerable impact on social and vocational lives of individuals. Technological changes makes both institutions and individuals more flexible and adaptable. Thus individual sense of job security transforms into employability via acquiring new skills and developing existing ones constantly [1]. In this context it is inevitable to adapt career guidance to keep up with this change. Because current development have a direct impact on methods, content and paradigms of vocational guidance and career counseling [2]. The transformation of communication and emergence of the internet as the center of communication are the most important two domains of

this broad trend. Information and communication technologies (ICT) redefines the interactions in many areas ranging from education to commerce. For this reason, it is necessary to take into account the transformative effects of these technologies as well as the ICT tools used for career guidance and counseling.

The economic counterpart of same trends is related to knowledge and creativity. Reference [3] defines creative economy as “the transactions of creative products that have an economic good or service that results from creativity and has economic value”. By a broader perspective “creative economy” is an evolving concept based on creative assets potentially generating economic growth and development. It is a “feasible development option” embracing innovative and multidisciplinary action on policy level [4]. In this article creative economy term is defined in a multidisciplinary sense as an economic order that importance of immaterial work, knowledge and creativity increases [5] and the diffusion of policies aiming toward that economic order [6].

In this fairly new economic context individual workers needs to be creative regardless of the job they deal with [7]. Immaterial economy configures labour markets with a demand on “analytic skills, global competencies and understanding of markets in trade able knowledge” [8]. Thus learning and career planning is emphasized as an individual initiative, and newly graduates expected to find better solutions for their prosperity by their own. Regarding potential solutions offered by communication technologies in career guidance, in this highly individualized educational and economic setting that pushes more people every year for developing better set of skills and finding better opportunities in a dynamic way, technology usage for career purposes need to be discussed further.

## II. USAGE OF TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The use of technology for guidance initially aims at cost efficiency, and nowadays it turns into constructs that increase the interaction between the client and the consultant and consultants in similar situations [9]. Historically, ICT implementations go through four stages in guidance. While previous stages have been characterized by cost effective software support, interactivity has increased since the third phase, which has become widespread. In recent years, the increase in the content of the interaction with the capacity of bandwidth raises [10]. In Turkey by the emergence of Internet Service Providers number of Internet subscribers increased from 1996 to 1999 respectively 100,000 to 700,000 – 850,000; exceeding 1% of the population [11]. In 2016 internet usage increased to more

than 46 million people in Turkey, covering %58 of the population [12]. This trend in technology acceptance level of Turkey, indicates further importance of ICT technologies in social and economic domains including career consultancy.

Counselors find it beneficial to use information technology in career counseling. It is thought that technology support has enabled the efficient use of time to manage the voluminous information produced in the consulting process [13]. The ICT based vocational guidance and career counseling services used in Europe are diverse as matching, self-evaluation, job market opportunities and tools to support the job search process [14]. However, technological tools differ according to the characteristics of the target groups and the level of education [15]. According to the technology used, the services provided are divided into two types, ie, simultaneous and non-simultaneous [16]. Non-synchronous technologies; Communication via e-mail and e-mail lists, content delivery via web sites, and content-focused content packages. Frequently asked questions web pages are the best examples. Simultaneous technologies create the communication situation in which questions and answers are transmitted in real time. Remote access technologies, such as telephone calls, virtual classrooms, instant messaging, video conferencing, etc., enable direct participation of clients in the process.

For the integration of computer systems with guidance programs there are four models proposed [17]. Using ICT system discrete from other career guidance activities is stand-alone model. Counseling in a short period of time before and after the use of computer-aided system is supported model. Third, incorporated model in which computer systems is used during guidance and consultation process. The progressive model in which guidance starts consecutively before or after the computer system usage in a developmental sequence.

It's argued that demand for career guidance via computer mediation is growing [18]. Main issue about this trend is not whether human interaction or face to face communication could be replaced or not; because as Offer suggested "human-machine contrast" is not an useful approach for future planning. From this perspective the main problem is technology acceptance level of counselors; whether they know how or learn to use ICT systems aimed at assisting or complementing guidance. Thus models mentioned above provides a functional approach to ICT usage in guidance as associating guidance sessions with ICT systems. Today, consulting by personal access through information and communication technologies (self-service) is a common feature of career guidance. Internet is the initial communication medium considering personal access to data related to career development. By achieving public access to business and vocational knowledge which is digitally disseminated, the Internet meets the information needs in career counseling. Besides when consulates reach quickly and cost-effectively the information they need, service quality of career guidance and counseling professionals significantly enhances [19].

From this perspective research results in Turkey coincides with the general trend across the world.

Counselors in Turkey and basic materials will not reach enough information to use when you need professional counseling and job-to-date information about the world. In the field of vocational guidance counselors at most (76%) admitted they are using internet resources [20]. The use of technology facilitates the search and management of professional information as well as the diversification of the consulting process through methods such as video conferencing or instant messaging [21]. According to the authors, the use of technology in career counseling can provide significant gains through the development of systematic career planning activities and key competencies in the event of some administrative challenges being overcome.

### **III. CURRENT TECHNOLOGIES USED IN CAREER GUIDANCE IN TURKEY**

From 1950s till today in Turkey, the importance of vocational guidance and career counselling is increasing. Thanks to enrichment of projects and academic studies carried out by public institutions in this area, especially after 1995 systematic steps were taken [22]. These systematic steps which promote active labour market programs aimed at increasing employability of the workforce and labor market effectiveness. Public employment services in Turkey is provided by Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR). In accordance with the policies and academic works on career guidance ISKUR aims at "directing job seekers to suitable training programs and jobs/professions in according to their interests and abilities" [23]. These services should be provided to nearly two and a half million registered unemployed by ISKUR [24]. This voluminous population with diverse attributes and interests makes this work impossible without recourse to data management techniques, information and communication technologies.

In Turkey the use of ICT with the aim of job and vocational counselling, institutionalizes with some distinct implementations. For example in order to reach job seekers and employers faster ISKUR informs through SMS and e-mail. In 2013, more than eleven million SMS were sent to concerned institutions [25]. In addition, to serve more effectively and quickly for the job seekers with Implemented Corporate Transformation Project, a portal is created online text messaging can be automated and made with remote access. With this portal it is intended to provide for filling out resumes and seeking job, accessing information about the basic professional competence and professional fields [26]. Professional information files approved by Vocational Advisory Commission is published on internet within the scope of ISKUR e-learning.

Turkish official authority of vocational standards, Vocational Qualifications Institution (MYK) opens professional standards to online access. These documents prepared by relevant institutions and examined by sector committees are published on The Official Gazette and approved by the board of directors of MYK. It is aimed that the opening of professional standards to the public will enable individuals to know the traits required to do jobs

successfully and direct their careers through this information.

Online resources offered by ISKUR and MYK are the examples of ICT use which facilitate accessing to vocational information to job seekers and students. Mainly, these applications give on to job counselling can be evaluated within the scope of stand-alone model which is required not to integrate the guidance activities with ICT. Presentation of information on online access is an important step for job and vocational counselling, making these systems functional and widely used is up to its integration with other consulting activities.

The first computer-aided applications in the field of career counselling in schools was implemented at the beginning 1990s under the names of CHOISES and Computer Aided Vocational Guidance (BILDEMER). Derived from the first program which became dysfunctional due to a change in transition to higher education entrance exam system in 1998, a self-assessment tool called BILDEMER-O is developed for secondary level students [27]. The system has two main functions. The first function is to enable students to see eligible school types and high school fields, the second one is to offer an appropriate section for students who turn towards vocational high schools [28]. These programs are the examples of a incorporated model which includes computer systems in guidance process theoretically. In spite of the fact that according to a recent study 7% of guide counsellors notifies to use this program [29]. For this reason it can be considered that existing programs don't benefit from ICT potential.

Besides independent computer programs above there are near-dated developments, which offer self-assessment and vocational knowledge, functioning via internet. National Vocational Information System of Ministry of Education can be showed as an example in this field. It is aimed that students evaluate themselves with the support and encouragement of guide teachers, at the end of the measurements appropriate training areas are offered for students. Another example is Hacettepe University Career Profile, online version of a self-report vocational interest scale. This tool is used as an integrating part of counselling process of career management center.

In Turkey, guidance and career counselling services dedicated for entrance exam to higher education, are focused on transition from high school to university. This process that mainly students are ranked according to their academic abilities reduces the effect of other features of vocational choices. In the stage of placement to higher education, it is assumed that students make the most appropriate choice for their individual characteristics. University choice counselling which aims to achieve maximum benefit from exam scores moves ahead of vocational counselling [30]. In the field of choice counselling which becomes an important topic in guidance activities oriented for students, there are many ICT systems under the names preference engines, robots, machines and so on. The latest and the most comprehensive one is Higher Education Program ATLAS of Council of Higher Education. Although they may seem like decision support systems; it is realized a calculation in fact not only with

criteria oriented to job and professions, but also between individual exam score and a minimum of targeted department. Despite of information processing capacity and its widespread use, this situation indicates that ICT systems offer very limited support for the career needs of careerists.

Although tendency to use ICT that led by Official institutions seems positive, use of computer-aided vocational information/guidance systems are not widespread enough [31]. However especially due to the small number of guides and consultants in Turkey, it can be heard about the needs for advantages provided by ICT. Number of school counsellors is not adequate and is not distributed uniformly throughout the country. According to the data of 2004-2005 academic year, the number of students per counsellor in Turkey is more than a thousand [32]. Addition to these practical need deriving from lack of experts, scientific studies in Turkey recommends increased use of ICT in guidance. In the report of ISKUR [33] through the utilization of information and communication technologies, it is indicated the increase of the quality and access of vocational information. In another study [34] although job and vocational counsellors have skills of ICT in a basic level, they don't use ICT tools enough in job and vocational counselling services. It is seen that the lack of knowledge and experience of based on ICT tools of ISKUR counsellors is an obstacle for competency in virtual guidance field of institution. In recent years, it can be thought that projects and studies that aim to promote the use of ICT in career counselling have positive contributions.

By taking into account of computer-aided systems used in Turkey there seems little attention given to the current developments in employment conditions regarding creative economy context. Career counseling technologies used in Turkey seem to focus on making the right decisions by equipping individuals with information without much emphasis on the changes that individuals face in the creative economy context. The technologies used in this case seem to be more focused on increasing productivity in the current conditions rather than being a future innovation in career guidance. It can be suggested that a comprehensive strategy that considers the current trend towards creative economy and changes in careers need to be taken about an adequate guidance system. Because in accordance with the needs of careerists and institutions in the creative economy context counsellors and guides need to utilize ICT tools in a manner understands and prepares for future developments.

#### **IV. CREATIVE ECONOMY CONTEXT AND INNOVATING FOR CAREER GUIDANCE**

Macro dynamics of global economy affects career guidance owing changes in employment styles. Apart from classical employment relations; in which employee bounded to an institution, concept of self-employment in new economic order requires workers to be adaptable and self-sufficient to create their career by themselves [35]. As authors argue this concept is far more wider than actual self-employed people to all workers however they work under an employment contract. Temporary projects inside single-project organizations, in sectors ranging from finance,

computer or creative industries, are mediators of career success [36] thus careerists are not only responsible for identifying their own traits and matching them to jobs but also specifying successful business projects that gives reputation to individuals. In this complex setting uncertainty is defined to be a problem for careerists [37].

By emphasise on information in traditional career guidance literature; careerists mistakenly directed to a scheme that every possible future career options are covered in guidance sessions. As authors careerist need to balance this objective information by questioning and preparing themselves for some unpredictable circumstances in the future [38]. This approach resembles the short-term focused attributes of “prectariat” coined by Standing [39]; freelance and temporary working people who defined as precarious proletariat of new economy. As the author argues as prectariat suffers from ineffective control over their time, it becomes harder to develop oneself by learning in a longer term perspective.

Reference [40] proposes an approach for career guidance of creative labour. This includes a context driven dynamism embracing individual’s behaviors as well as broader services for inclusive guidance. In this proposition guidance covers financial and emotional means to overcome uncertainty related problems. Also stressing on exploring and learning by individual herself.

In the past decades, employment has been rapidly externalizing, and companies are working more with temporary or project-type employees. As the developments in this area are frequently mentioned, it is noteworthy that the most important career source in deeply segmented employment markets of creative sectors is reputation [41]. In this case, individuals do not only have to understand the information on career opportunities and interpret them in order to reach the right career decision. At the same time, they need to demonstrate some ability to prove their own success and visualize it correctly. Reference [42] points out three important changes in the career counseling by use of technology, one of them is the increased interaction. The increase in interaction is characterized by the free communication environment where many users like social media access to many users. In this case, the individual acts as an agent that manages his own personal brand and announces it as widely as possible. Although this does not diminish the importance of sharing information on jobs and business opportunities, it removes them from the focus point of career development.

Although dealing with vocational information deficit is still at the top of the facilitating effects of computer-aided career counseling [43], career awareness is far from being only the vocational information in creative work that divides career decisions into multiple temporary or project-type jobs. Because of the network perspective of the new economy, "careers are patchworks of vocations" [44]. People and even firms seem to be nodes of network trying to find most suitable connections for surviving and prospering. In the context of creative economy, professional network have increased in importance to social life alternatives (family, friends, etc.) [45]. Because the most up-to-date knowledge of the professional network for

individuals in the cycle of continuous and dynamic job search, discovery, completion and unemployment is one of the most important career sources.

## V. CONCLUSION

The use of technology, assisted with the right strategy has the potential to increase the level of access to the consultation process of job seekers and students. Thus it will be easier to provide more inclusive vocational counselling by innovative technologies. As consultation process becomes more transparent and the vocational knowledge of students and job seekers can increase. Career oriented information communication technologies used in Turkey are generally used to make the traditional services of institutional structures more productive. Aside from the significant benefits of reaching more individuals, the use of technology cannot be said to result in a major paradigm shift in career counseling and career guidance in Turkey.

Creative economy concept requires highly creative and skilled workers not only for sake of effectivity but also to meet demand of dynamic markets. Firms that depend heavily on project based agile production methods have little opportunity to conduct a conventional recruitment and selection cycle. And precarious workers have little opportunity to make pre-planned career moves for a stable and linear future prospect. Although public and educational bodies are making huge efforts to promote career guidance through technology and help preparation of students to start their career effectively. But most of the time these efforts heavily depend on conventional sector segmentation and classical career paths.

As the creative economy produces new forms of employment, more and more young people are put to flexible work every year. In this case, it is possible that the technologies used in the field of career counseling and vocational guidance can be designed as agents that facilitate meeting the new guidance needs in the light of the theoretical studies referring to this new career concept rather than just a capacity building tool. Creative economy offers exceptions that embraces different life and work styles, thus effects guidance efforts helping those who works under flexible conditions. By considering the experience and existing systems of Turkey in this field it is possible to benefit from the potential of technologies for this purpose.

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