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Vocational and technical education in Eu nations and Turkey

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Abstract

In this study, similarities and differences between European Union members and Turkey in their vocational education systems and structures are identified and within this context, the studies in EU and Turkey are evaluated. Qualitative analysis methodology was used to examine some of the components of education and vocational education systems of Turkey and European Union Nations like Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, France and Spain, and those studies done or being done on vocational education in European Union and Turkey. The data were obtained by qualitative document search. Research data underwent content and descriptive analysis. Study results reveal the necessity to restructure the vocational and technical education system in Turkey with a holistic approach.

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Keywords: European Union and Turkey; vocational and technical education systems and structures.

1. Introduction

The aim of vocational education institutions is to train qualified work power for vocational areas. However, in Turkey, the joining of the graduates from those institutions to work life is not at desired levels. There are many reasons behind this. Since its foundation, the European Union has identified its goals and strategies towards vocational education and has traveled a long way with cooperation studies among member nations to realize these goals and strategies. In Turkey, some studies have been and are still being done on vocational-technical education by taking into account both the goals set in the development plans and decisions taken in the National Education Councils and the developments and improvements needed in the EU harmonization process. But it is clearly known that those efforts haven't solved the vocational-technical education problems and haven't provided desired improvements. This study was done to contribute to the resolutions of the vocational education problems (Akpinar, Ercan, Lyons, 2001)

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2. Method

This research is a descriptive and qualitative study. Qualitative analysis methodology was used to examine some of the components of education and vocational education systems of Turkey and European Union Nations like Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, France and Spain, and those studies done or being done on vocational education in European Union and Turkey. The data were obtained by qualitative document search. Research data underwent content and descriptive analysis.

3. Findings and Results

3.1 Vocational and technical education systems and structures

In this study, the vocational and technical education systems and structures, vocational secondary education (first and second level), vocational secondary education student rates, vocational education models, duration of vocational education, vocational secondary education programs, vocational guidance and orientation, intermediary structures in vocational education, administration in vocational education, and vocational education at tertiary education and continuous vocational education dimensions of Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Spain and Turkey are comparatively analyzed and evaluated. Important findings are shown in table. According to those findings stated in the table, it can be seen that, although there are important differences between countries in terms of vocational and technical education systems and structures, there are quite a few common points among European Union nations. Turkey has differences in many dimensions. Especially, in vocational education programs and identification and certification of vocational qualities, Turkey is far different than other nations.

Table-1: Education and Vocational Education Structures in EU Nations and Turkey

	Germany, United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Spain and Turkey	Important Similarities and Differences
First Secondary Education Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In <u>Germany</u>, besides multi-purpose schools there various general secondary education schools, first two years are orientation stages In <u>United Kingdom</u>, there is general education, multi-purpose and technology schools (3 years) In <u>Denmark</u>, it is embedded in the obligatory and common general education which is inside the structure of primary education In <u>France</u>, four years, first two years general and common education, last two years education in technology classes In <u>Spain</u>, obligatory, common and four years general education level In <u>Turkey</u>, inside the structure of obligatory and common primary school education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Germany, France and United Kingdom, there are various types of schools where there is obligatory education. In Denmark, Turkey and Spain there is obligatory and common general education, but in Spain this level has a different structure. In all countries general education has the most weight.
Second Secondary Education Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In <u>Germany</u>, besides general education and multi-purpose schools, there is dual system, full-time vocational education, technical education and general education schools that are harmonious with a vocation, with weight on vocational education In <u>United Kingdom</u>, there are general education secondary schools, technology and sixth structure colleges and advanced education colleges where there is vocational education In <u>Denmark</u>, general education schools, advanced preparatory exam programs and initial vocational education, schools where there is advanced level commerce and technical education In <u>France</u>, general education, technology education and vocational education schools In <u>Spain</u>, general education, private vocational education schools In <u>Turkey</u>, general, vocational and technical secondary education institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At this level in all countries there are general, vocational and technical education schools. In all countries general education prepares students to universities; technical education prepares students to university and employment; vocational education prepares students to employment. In all countries initial vocational education starts at this level. In all countries there different school structures giving education at different levels and in different durations.
Vocational Secondary Education Student Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Germany 65-70% In United Kingdom 65-70% In Denmark 63% In France 42% In Spain 41% In Turkey 35% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocational education is most widespread in Germany, United Kingdom and Denmark. Turkey has the lowest rate in vocational education student enrollments

Secondary Education Vocational Education Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Germany based on enterprises • In United Kingdom based on schools and enterprises • In Denmark based on enterprises • In France based on schools and enterprises • In Spain based on schools and enterprises • In Turkey based on schools and enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In all countries, besides schools, there is vocational education in enterprises, whereas in Germany and Denmark there is more vocational education at enterprise and in France and Turkey there is more vocational education at schools.
Duration of Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <u>Germany</u>, vocational area is 1-3,5 years according to full or part-time programs • In <u>United Kingdom</u>, 3 years at schools, employment projects change according to vocational areas • In <u>Denmark</u>, 3-4 years according to schools and vocational areas • In <u>France</u>, 2-3 years according to schools and programs • In <u>Spain</u>, 2+2 years, work training changes according to vocations • In <u>Turkey</u>, at least 4 years, 5 years in Technical and Anatolian Technical High Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although there are different vocational education durations in European Union nations, duration of education is determined by vocational areas. - In Turkey, although the duration of education changes according to school type, there is same duration of education in every school and vocation.
Vocational Secondary Education Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In EU nations there are education programs for employment vocations, which have standards and which have been approved • In Turkey, there are education programs with no standards and are generally for traditional vocations • In EU nations, there are general education programs that are based on vocational standards, have wide-based modular structures and are aimed at specific sectors • In Turkey, there are general culture and special area programs which complete each other and prepared with linear approach • In EU nations there is student-centered education with a lot of weight on application • In Turkey, there is teacher-centered education with a lot of weight on theory • In EU nations there are continuous program development applications, which are based on vocational qualities defined at national levels and where social parties are active • In Turkey, there are non-continuous program development applications where social parties are not active • In EU nations there is national level vocational standards-based certification (accreditation) • In Turkey, evaluations based on theoretical exams and diplomas valid at local levels • In EU nations, there is vertical and horizontal transfer between schools and programs • In Turkey, there is no vertical and horizontal transfer between schools and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although there are different applications in European Union nations concerning the vocational education programs, the applications and trends show similarities, whereas in Turkey there are totally different applications. - There is no national level vocational qualities system in Turkey, that's why there is no notion of vocational standards and program developments based on them. - Application and participation of social parties have been ignored in our country. - In Turkey programs are not evaluated and there is no national level evaluation and certification system.
Vocational Guidance and Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all countries, in primary education and first and second levels of secondary education, vocational guidance and orientation is given through either guidance services or developed program applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is understood that vocational guidance and orientation activities are effective in Germany, United Kingdom, and Denmark, but not
Administration in Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Germany local • In United Kingdom local • In Denmark local • In France central • In Spain local • In Turkey central 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In France and Turkey administration is centralized, whereas in accordance with EU vocational education policy it is local in other countries.
Intermediary Structures in Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <u>Germany</u>, there is a vocational preparatory year after the first level of secondary education • In <u>United Kingdom</u>, there are various ways to attain vocational qualities (daytime, part-time, evening courses and distance education) • In <u>Denmark</u>, manufacturing schools (work programs) as short term vocational structures • In <u>France</u>, equivalent education • In <u>Spain</u>, social assurance programs • In <u>Turkey</u>, none 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although their structures and applications are different, there are short term intermediary vocational education structures in EU nations to provide basic vocational qualities to those who don't have them; after the basic education in those structures there is advanced level vocational education; no such structures in Turkey.

Tertiary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Except for Spain, in other EU nations vocational tertiary education is developed and widespread; in Spain there are a few vocational tertiary education institutions and they are still developing • Vocational tertiary education institutions are still under development in Turkey 	- Spain and Turkey is different from the other nations; there is a need to improve the vocational tertiary education institutions.
Continuous Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the requirement of systematic continuous vocational policies, in all EU nations, there are structures build or under development, whereas in Turkey there is no systematic continuous vocational education 	- Continuous vocational education is gaining importance in EU nations, but not in Turkey.

3.2 Trends and studies in vocational and technical education

European Union member nations have the responsibility to follow the EU vocational education policies and do the necessary arrangements. Work power mobility, globalization in production and developments in information and communication technologies have necessitated the member nations to harmonize national and international education policies, especially vocational education policies. There are improvements and changes in vocational education in concordance with continuous technological and social changes. In those changes and improvements, it is proposed that financial support must be oriented towards vocational education and that the administration of vocational education must be centralized. Besides all these, the following can be stated as general tendencies in those countries: the coordination of school education and enterprise education, generalization of vocational education, the participation of social parties not only to the application but also to the school education, the coordination of general education together with theoretical and applied vocational education, the notion of improving the skills needed in the workplace and reflecting that notion in the programs. General tendency is to think full-time vocational education as a step and to build applied education on it and especially by taking the European Union principles into account, to establish continuous education structures that will enable lifelong learning. Under this conditions, the emphasis shifts from schools to enterprises and gives more power to them in vocational education. Updating the contents of vocational education, recognition and provision of equivalence of titles, certificates and continuous education programs within the context of national vocational qualities, to process the system data, and mutual recognition of vocational qualities is necessary in member states. Thus, the qualities of teachers and trainers, instructional methods and structures and education programs must be well suited to the needs of work qualities. In such a case, in vocational education which is seen as an investment on human capital; active employment policies, the participation of social parties and regions and general quality systems have been accepted as general principles. It can be clearly seen from the findings that the main function of vocational education in European Union is employment. This function serves to train vocational personnel in secondary education vocational schools and tertiary education level vocational education institutions that complete each other. It is conceived that the career guidance services required by this structure is present in all levels of vocational education in European Union nations. As a result, it can be said that, in vocational education, European Union nations do the necessary studies to provide individuals to work market at every level and age and to recognize the qualities in national and international levels and to improve the coordination between general education and vocational education (Ulusal Ajans, 2004).

In Turkey, on the other hand, the following principles and policies towards vocational education have been accepted in the 8th development plan; to change the structure of secondary education from school type to program type, to employ a wide-based basic education program in vocational education, to adapt the programs of vocational-technical education to vocational standards and to improve functional cooperation with the work life, to establish cooperation and division of labor between vocational and technical secondary education institutions and tertiary level vocational education institutions, to provide opportunities for the adoption of lifelong learning notion, and to encourage local administrations, volunteer institutions and private sector to join these activities (DPT, 2005 Investment Program). Even though these policies have been in the development plans for years, they have never been realized or put into practice. However, according to the resolutions taken in the 1999 Helsinki Summit, for Turkey to benefit from the MEDA funds, 2 big projects were carried out in Turkey. Those projects are,

“Empowering the Vocational Education System – MEGEP” and “Modernization Project of Vocational and Technical Education – MTEM”. Project MEGEP which was signed on 4 July 2000, covers the vocational and technical education at secondary education level. The aims of this 5-year-project which started on 30 September 2002 are: to improve the quality and suitability of vocational education through the application of a national reform which included establishment of a national competence system; to empower the public capacities of public institutions, social parties and enterprises at national, regional and local levels; to accelerate the localization process of the system through incorporation of social actors to the reform process (MEB, MEGEP, 2005). On the other hand, the MTEM project, the financial agreement of which was signed between Turkish Republic and European Union Commission on 25 July 1997, the supplementary contract of which was signed on 12 December 2001 and which started on 7 July 2003 for a duration of 42 months, aims to increase the capacities towards an installation and development of a modern and effective teacher education system and to encourage regional partnerships between vocational and technical education faculties, vocational tertiary schools, social parties, vocational and technical education foundations and institutions (MEB, MTEM, 2005). Besides these projects, national level vocational competencies institution legislation was prepared and legitimized to define the vocational competencies harmonious with the European Union. But this institution is not effective at the moment. These studies are not adequate and the vocational education in Turkey must be restructured with a holistic approach at every level, starting from primary education to tertiary education.

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