

PARENTAL PERCEPTION OF THE EDUCATION OF THEIR ADOLESCENT CHILDREN: EVIDENCE FROM GREEK SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to specify and investigate the determinants of parental intention through data collected from 200 parents of youths aged fifteen years. Results showed that Greek parents guide their children to follow upper secondary education rather than technical education for a number of reasons but mainly: technical education prevents children from continuing in higher education, Greek technical secondary education provides a low standard of education, and there are few career opportunities. Since the Greek parents believed that the Greek educational system does not prepare children for entry into an appropriate profession, the paper identifies that the school vocational program is an important issue in improving labor performance. The updating of the school curriculum and the recruitment of good teachers is urgently needed so as to respond to the increasing demands for effective school management.

INTRODUCTION

In most countries, the transition from compulsory secondary education to post-compulsory secondary education is the most critical phase of the education process. The choices made by adolescents have direct consequences not only for individuals but also for the whole of society. Moreover, this particular choice significantly affects the function of the whole education system and the socio-economic system. The choice of job occupation is a critical decision that young people are usually obliged to take at the age of fifteen. In order to assist with the decision-making, reliable information and channels of communication appear to be necessary. Clarification of individual objectives, the specification and interpretation of future work opportunities in terms of satisfaction and career development, is usually a painful process not only for the adolescents but also for their families since they play a key role in the decision-making process.

Parental involvement in their children's education and choice of career has gained momentum recently and has been a concern of education policy makers. The education system is an area where the relationship between the consumer (parents) and the producer (schools) tilts the balance of power between the two towards the former (Munn, 1998).

Research indicates that parental influence on a student's choice of education and career, is an important issue for the general welfare of the school system (Eliophotou-Menon, 1997, 1998; Hobbs, Docecki, Hoover-Dempsey, Moroney, Shayne & Weeks, 1984; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kassotakis, 1991, 1999; Kazamias & Kassotakis 1995; Kotlik & Harrison, 1989; Papanastasiou & Michaelides, 1988; Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). Parental involvement, through the creation of associations and governing bodies in which parents were represented, is a mechanism that encouraged educational planners to pay attention to the key matter of pupil achievement. These bodies, including other out-of-school participants, allow society to express a view on education and “drive” the education system towards improved standards in education. Recent work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) describes the main reasons for parental, teacher and school involvement, seeing this involvement as an important part of the school system that functions to create positive outcomes for children of all ages. In particular, parental involvement is considered the most important influence on a student's progression through education and related development that has major outcomes for child learning.

The strong trend towards general secondary education in Greece has been a concern for Greek education policy-makers that identify a serious problem in the area of technical-vocational education and fear that this problematic area of the education process will continue to exist in the future. According to researchers (Eliophotou-Menon, 1997; Kassotakis, 1991, 1999; Kazamias & Kassotakis 1995; Kokkotas, 1978; Koyzis, 1989; Moustaka & Kasimati, 1984; Lampiri-Dimaki, 1974; Reppa & Fotiadou-Zahariou, 1997; etc.), parental influence on adolescent education and career decisions in Greece is the subject of a number of institutional, social, economic and employment factors. Of the various social factors, parents are often the most crucial (Evans Hairston, 2000; Lee, 1984). The structure, socioeconomic characteristics, status, attitudes and the development (through time) of the Greek families favor the receptiveness towards general secondary education.

A steady increase of students enrolled in general secondary education is also attributed to the fact that the Greek economy was unable to keep pace with the rate of unemployment, and to the concern of Greek parents regarding the high rates of unemployment. General secondary education is seen by parents as the means of securing a comfortable and well-paid occupation (Demetriades, 1989; Eliophotou-Menon, 1998). The economic value of education is obvious from the stream of skilled and trained individuals entering the labor market. The rise of the unemployment in Greece is attributed to a great extent to the slow response of the education system to the continually changing technological environment of the labor market (Pesmatzoglou, 1987; Saiti, 2000).

Institutional forces have also a significant effect on the future pathway navigated through education by secondary school students. These include the status of secondary education, streaming methods and points of transition within the education system as well as the development of the secondary school curriculum (Eliophotou-Menon, 1998). Technical and Vocational education possesses a significant meaning and contributes to the improvement and development of a country. It helps education to adjust to the needs of the present socio-economic environment. The Greek education system, and more particularly the secondary school curriculum, prepares adolescents for enrolment in

general secondary education (lyceum). Given the need for additional information and improvements in Greek secondary vocational programs, the objectives of this study were:

- To investigate the parental role in the vocational guidance of children
- To determine how parents view work and their role in influencing their children's education and consequently their future career
- To define the socio-economic family factors such as family status, attitudes of parents towards work, those affecting children's career decisions, and parental perception of career choices for their children
- To determine the degree to which the existing curriculum responds to the needs of the pupils
- To investigate whether technical vocational schools and lyceums deal with the labor challenges and are able to equip young pupils with the necessary skills of the labor market, and finally
- To assess the Greek education system in terms of its technical and vocational education and to recommend strategies for improving the effectiveness of vocational education.

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL FORCES IN GREECE

Greek Educational forces

According to the 1975 Constitution (article 16) amended in 1986, education in Greece is under the supreme supervision of the State (Ministry of Education) and is conducted at the State's expense. It is important to note that Greek educational policy has two main purposes that can be described as follows:

- To maintain the structure (that is made by the Ministry of Education) of the socio-political system and at the same time attempt to solve possible problems coming from this structure (such as equal opportunities);
- To reproduce the socio-political system and to contribute to economic development through the introduction of new scientific programs and new technologies.

The Pedagogical Institute is responsible for the formulation of guidelines, the preparation of time-tables and curricula, the commissioning and approval of textbooks, the provision of vocational guidance, the introduction of new subjects and the application of new teaching methods. The Greek education system is organized into three main areas.

Primary education. Primary education in Greece is compulsory at the age of 5 1/2 years and lasts for six years. Apart from the large public education sector (which includes primary and secondary levels) there is also a small private education sector (fee-paying schools) which provides both primary and secondary education.

Secondary education (gymnasia and lycea). Three years of lower secondary education (gymnasium) is also compulsory and the second level of secondary education consists of two types of schools: the three year general lyceum and the three-year technical and vocational lyceum who do not wish to continue their studies in a general lyceum. The path from elementary education to secondary is without examinations. Those who have attended lyceums (encompassing 12 years of formal education) are allowed to continue

their studies in Higher Education after a successful participation in the general nation-wide examinations (Greek Parliament, 1983, 1985). Those who graduated from technical and vocational lyceums are allowed to continue their studies only in Technological Education Institutions after successful participation in the general nation-wide exams.

Higher education (Universities and Technological Institutions). By contrast to elementary and secondary education, tertiary level education is provided only by public institutions.

The education system of a country needs to prepare young people with skills and abilities that are considered necessary for increased labour productivity and economic development (Blaug, 1987; Colman & Nixon, 1994; Psacharopoulos & Woodhall, 1986; Saiti, 2000; Schultz, 1961; Todaro, 1996). However, the Greek education system does not bring educational and occupational needs closer together and thus cannot contribute effectively to the vocational guidance of the students. The most significant problems that the Greek education system have been faced with in recent years are excessive competition for ensuring a place in higher education, the large number of enrollments in higher studies abroad, and the emergence in the labor market of a large number of high school graduates that do not have any marketable qualifications (Kassotakis, 1991, 1999). In spite of good planning and support, according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (1997, p.117), the School Vocational orientation program in Greece has not been able to win any credibility among teachers and their parents and the public in general.

Greek Social Forces

Parent attitudes towards the educational and career decisions do not appear in an empty socio-economic environment. Demographic, cultural and environmental approaches have confirmed the interrelationship between the family and the socio-economic environment (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Osipow, 1968; Reagor & Rehm, 1994; Smith, Beaulieu & Israel, 1992; Splete & Freeman-George, 1985). Factors like family size, the parents' level of education, the parents' workplace expectations, homework supervision, as well as ambitions and expectations, determine the extent of parental involvement in their children's choice of education and job/career.

Looking at the Greek family it can be observed that it remains fundamentally the conservative and basic unit of society with deep roots in the past. However, in the last few years the Greek family has been undergoing radical changes along with the wider society. The supplementation of family care by social care agencies is a common feature in Greek society. Life-choices of young pupils continue to be strongly influenced by the family (Kokkotas, 1978; Moustaka & Kasimati, 1984). The major changes in Greek families that occurred after 1960 are (Apostolopoulos, 1996; Georgas, 1994; Mastoraki, 1994; Papadioti, 1994; Theodoropoulou, 2002):

- The increased participation of women in the labor force that arises from the need to contribute to the household income
- The decline in the number of marriages
- The significant drop in birthrates
- The alternatives trends of cohabitation (companionship)

- The increase in the number of divorces
- The increase in the number of single family units.

In Greek society, despite these changes, the family "plays an important role in organizing the life of children as well as in affecting, up to a certain degree, choices of future occupation" (Moustaka & Kasimati, 1984, p.49). The consistent economic environmental pressure, such as high rates of unemployment, forces Greek families to discourage children from job-choices according to their interests since the labor market has limited opportunities. "In their pursuit of fame and fortune, the best and brightest high school students have little time for elective vocational courses" (Silberman, 1986, p.6). Children and their parents usually avoid economically productive professions in favor of "more comfortable and prestigious paper entrepreneurial positions in law and finance" (Catri & Barrick, 1996, p.1).

However, most of the time interference from parents is likely to generate conflict and negative results since work may be associated with failure when it is not substantially creative to boost self-respect, esteem and satisfaction. On the other hand, so long as any conflict over appropriate parental behavior does not occur, parental involvement in their children's decision over education and job/career can yield a very positive outcome since parents can help their children to choose a profession according to the children's own interests (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Several researchers (Dimitropoulos, 1986, 1989, 1998; Kassotakis, 1991, 1999; Kazamias & Kassotakis, 1995; Lampiri-Dimaki, 1974; Reppa & Fotiadou-Zahariou, 1997; etc.) have attempted to investigate the role of the Greek family in adolescent education and occupation choices. Results showed that the influence of the Greek family has gone through variations over the years, that vocational guidance of students is not an efficient tool so as to develop the necessary knowledge of the increased needs of the labor market, and that several family characteristics, mostly socio-economic, have a significant position on the decision-making regarding career choices.

Parents usually believe that a university degree is a golden key to greater opportunities in life. The data in Table 1 below indicate the strong competition for entry into higher education in Greece.

It is clear from the above Table that, until 1999, a considerable number of students did not succeed in entering higher education in Greece and, as a result, a large number of them enrolled in studies abroad. Until 1999, candidates competed in only four core subject areas selected from among the subjects of high school curriculum. Scoring was based on performance in these core subjects only irrespective of previous high school grades. The selection and acceptance of students to higher education was determined by combining the candidate's score on the entrance exam with the higher education institutions preferences.

After 1999 there were changes in the process system of graduating from upper general secondary education and the number of written subjects taken in the nation-wide entrance exams. These changes occurred in 2000. With the new entrance examination system, applicants for higher education compete in nine subjects in total, for which they prepare

during the final year of lyceum. The new entrance examination system is based entirely on the high school curriculum.

Table 1. *Number of Applicants to Higher Education in the years 1968, 1974, 1977, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1990, 1995, 1997 - 2002.*

Year	Applicants	Successes (N)	Successes (%)
1968	33,086	9,191	27.78
1974	54,955	14,262	25.95
1977	72,481	13,223	18.24
1981	75,206	14,746	19.61
1984	129,374	23,598	18.24
1985	149,268	23,666	15.85
1990	124,658	22,890	18.36
1995	157,525	45,356	28.79
1997	144,450	51,600	35.72
1998	161,507	62,289	38.56
1999	166,288	71,265	42.85
2000	136,675	85,045	62.22
2001	118,738	88,284	74.35
2002	93,607	68,600	73.29

Note. The structure of the entrance examination was consistent up to 1999, when it was revised. The statistics for the later years reflect a mix of students, some continuing with the old entrance examinations and others adopting the new. Hence, the old system is gradually fading away, with a natural depletion of those using the old entrance system (Greek Parliament, 1997, 2001).

Student's preference for the institutions of the selected field of study is declared on the higher-education application according to priority. The selection and acceptance of students to higher education is determined by combining the candidate's score in the entrance exam with the higher education institutions preferences and number of places available in each institution. The candidate's score is the highest criterion followed by the other two in the sequence given. Using this procedure, it is difficult for any candidate not to meet the entrance requirement. For certain higher institutions students may have to take exams in an additional subject for example Architecture: Technical drawing. Thus, trend in the number of successes may seem distorted by the statistics for recent years.

Table 2 shows the number of the Greek students enrolls in higher education abroad for the years 1978-79, 1983-84, 1991-92, 1994-95 and 1997-98.

Table 2. *Number of the Greek Students Enrolled in Higher Education Abroad*

Countries	1978-79	1983-84	1991-92	1994-95	1997-98
Great Britain	6,655	6,499	7,476	10,374	25,267
Italy	16,042	13,753	5,505	7,046	11,392
France	4,175	5,348	2,263	2,806	2,716
USA	2,937	4,956	3,275	-	-
Other Countries	2,716	5,703	6,946	30,147	49,574

Note. Source: Ministry of Education, Statistical department, 1990, 1995, 2002. The numbers in the table includes both the under-graduate and the post-graduate students.

From the above statistics it can be concluded that the emigration of students remains a costly factor for Greece. Greece is a country that is characterized by relatively low participation in technical education and although there has been an increased interest in technical and vocational education, this area continues to be problematic (Kazamias, 1987; Kazamias & Kassotakis, 1995). Technical and vocational education has been reduced to a low status in Greece. The result has been an imbalance in the Greek market due to the lack of a technically trained labor force (Drettakis, 2001; Saitis, 1999). Although in recent years technical education gained some positive attention and has been able to contribute to the restoration of the Greek economy and the demands of international competition, the crucial problem of low demand for Technical and Vocational education remains. The main reason for Greek parents and adolescents to prefer general education to technical and vocational education is because they perceive the latter to cater for the needs of young people with lower abilities. Indeed, researchers (Kozol, 1991; Mortimer, Finch, Dennethy, Lee & Beebe, 1994; Rojewski, 1997; Tuma, 1994;) claim that students experiencing economic disadvantage usually enrol in secondary vocational education, although technical and vocational education results in a number of benefits such as less unemployment and better paying jobs for adults.

Both the structure and the character of the Greek family have a significant influence on the professional direction of young pupils and subsequently on their future. Greek families encourage young pupils to aim for traditional professions such as those of doctor or lawyer. Although recently Greek parents have started to come to terms with the idea of technical occupations (Lakasas, 2002), the general attitude of Greek parents has not changed a great deal and this decreases even further the socio-economic effectiveness of the Greek educational system. The lack of vocational orientation in the Greek school system leads to mismatch between the education system and the labor market. The most significant attempt towards vocational orientation for young pupils who have finished their upper secondary education was the development of Vocational Training Institutes (IEK) (Zarifis, 1996). In order to respond to the rapid changes in the labor market and to promote technical and vocational education, the Greek education system should be committed to working with families, providing students with initiatives for participation in secondary vocational education, and finally enhancing attitudes towards technical and vocational education.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted to collect primary source data for the paper. Questionnaires were administered to 200 parents of youths aged fifteen during the academic year 2000-2001. The sample size - 200 parents - was randomly selected from the Athens area (Prefecture of Attiki). The high response rate (all parents accepted to answer the questionnaire) resulted in the completion of 200 usable questionnaires. However, there may be many points where the chosen data for this particular prefecture are of limited use. Therefore, the data are not sufficiently rich to allow for a deeper analysis of parental perception of their adolescents' education and career choices. These "gaps" of data in the research have partly determined the interpretation of the results.

At the age of fifteen, children should make educational and vocational decisions that definitely affect their adult lives. The questionnaire contained 33 questions designed to

determine parent's perception toward their children's education and career decision. In particular, the questions of the questionnaire related to the:

- Personal and professional characteristics of the parents;
- Parental perception of the schools vocational program and their adolescents' school achievement;
- Parental perception and attitudes towards general and technical-vocational education and sources of vocational guidance;
- Parental expectations, intentions and attitudes towards the occupational career of their adolescents;
- Parental assessment of the Greek education system.

The statistical analysis includes descriptive analysis (percentages) and correlation tests with relevant data. The main research questions of the study that needed to be answered (through parental perception) were:

- Does school vocational orientation reflect the learning needs (both educational and occupational) of pupils and contribute to the implementation and extension of the school curriculum?
- Does technical-vocational education deal with the continuing changes in the labor market and prescribed academic standards?
- Is the connection between technical-vocational education and the labor market strong?
- Does the education system provide students with the appropriate skills and abilities for a successful career?
- Does the education system provide vocational guidance to both pupils and parents?
- Does the education system provide a basis for the creation of equal opportunities in education and occupation for every pupil?

The results of the present study are being published for the information of education policy-makers so as to improve the Greek education system through the promotion of technical-vocational education and its contribution to the development of the Greek economy.

Findings

From the sample of 200 parents in question, 59.5% were women and 40.5% were men. The age of the respondents were: 50.5% between the age of 40 and 49, 34.0% between 30-39, 10.5% between 50-59, 3.0% between 20-29 and finally only 2.0% were over 60 years of age. The number of children that the majority of the respondents had (60.5%) is two. Almost all the respondents (97.0%) and their partners (wives/husbands) (91.5%) had graduated from a public school (see Table 3).

The educational level of the majority of the respondents (39.5%) was high school education. Of those remaining, 29.0% had a university degree, 20.5% had received technological education, 6.0% had done post-graduate studies and 5.0% had only received elementary education. The respective percentages for their partners (wives or husbands) were as follows: 40.5% had received high school education, 28.0% were

Table 3. *Frequencies of the Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents*

Variables	Absolute Frequency	Frequency (%)
Gender		
Women	119	59.5
Men	81	40.5
Total	200	100
Age of the respondents		
60 and over	4	2
50-59	21	10.5
40-49	101	50.5
30-39	68	34.0
20-29	6	3
Total	200	100
Educational level of the respondents		
High school education	79	39.5
University degree	58	29
Technological education	41	20.5
Post graduate studies	12	6
Elementary education	10	5
Total	200	100
Employment of the respondents		
Private employees	81	40.5
Public servants	44	22
Self-employed	23	11.5
Housework	20	10
Academic self-employed	18	9
Retired	10	5
Unemployed	4	2
Total	200	100
Annual family income of the respondents		
29,347 euros and over	30	15
23,500 euros to 29,500 euros	46	23.0
17,900 euros to 23,500 euros	52	26.0
12,032 euros to 17,608 euros	37	18.5
6,163 euros to 11,739 euros	28	14.0
0 to 5,869 euros	7	3.5
Total	200	100

graduates of a technological institution, 22.5% had a university degree, 6.0% had only finished primary school and 3.0% had post-graduates studies. A high percentage of the respondents (40.5%) were private employees whereas only 22.0% were public servants and 11.5% were self-employed. (see Table 3). When questioned whether or not "their job is relevant to the studies they received", the reply of most of the respondents (61.5%) was negative.

The most frequently reported annual family income was in the range from 17,900 euros to 23,500 euros - formerly 6,100,000 to 8,000,000 Greek Drachmas- (26.0%). The next

most reported annual family income was between 23,500 euros to 29,500 euros - formerly 8,100,000 to 10,000,000 Greek Drachmas- (23.0%) (see Table 3).

To the question "What is the role of the parents in the vocational guidance of their children" the majority of responses (86.0%) favored no parental involvement in their child's career or job decision. A high percentage of parents (90.5%) were aware of the existence of a school vocational program whereas 87.5% of them considered this program as important. Moreover, parents believe that the school's vocational guidance should begin from an early age. In particular, 86.5% of the respondents stated that the vocational guidance at school should take place between the ages of 12 and 15.

Table 4. *Frequencies of Parental Intention to Adolescent's Education and Parental Perception for the Greek Educational System*

Variables	Absolute Frequency	Frequency (%)
Parental intention to post-compulsory secondary education		
Parental intention to encourage their adolescent to follow general secondary education		
Yes	172	86.0
No	28	14.0
Total	200	100
Parental Statement that their adolescent intended to follow general secondary education so as to continue their studies in higher education		
Yes	177	88.5
No	23	11.5
Total	200	100
Parental Perception for the school vocational program as important issue in the educational procedure		
Yes	175	87.5
No	25	12.5
Total	200	100
Parental perception that the Greek educational System is ineffective		
Yes	158	79.0
No	42	21.0
Total	200	100
Children's grades at school		
Excellent	36	18.0
Very Good	109	54.5
Good	49	24.5
No Good	6	3.0
Total	200	100
Parental agreement with their adolescent intention		
Yes	192	96.0
No	8	4.0
Total	200	100

Table 5. *Frequencies of Determinants for Parental Preference to Adolescents Education and Sources for Vocational Guidance*

Variables	Absolute Frequency	Frequency (%)
Determinants of parental preference to general secondary education		
Technical education usually limits opportunities for career development		
Yes	90	45.0
No	70	35.0
Total	160	80
Technical education prevents children from continuing in higher education		
Yes	85	42.5
No	75	37.5
Total	160	80
Technical education provides children with low quality education		
Yes	80	40.0
No	80	40.0
Total	160	80
Their children are achieving good grades at school, giving them the chance to continue their studies in higher education		
Yes	71	35.5
No	89	44.5
Total	160	80
Parental Information Sources for the vocational guidance of their children		
Books and information guides		
Yes	163	81.5
No	37	18.5
Total	200	100
Conversation and constructive discussions with teachers		
Yes	125	62.5
No	75	37.5
Total	200	100
Media		
Yes	92	46.0
No	108	54.0
Total	200	100
Internet		
Yes	49	24.5
No	151	75.5
Total	200	100

Note. The missing 40 cases from the determinants of parental preference to general secondary education are those parents that would have encouraged their adolescent to follow technical-vocational education.

Most of the parents in question (74.5%) answered that they want their children to have jobs that differ from their own. Only 25.5% of the respondents stated that want their children to have the same profession that they have. The most popular reason (14.5%) given by parents in the latter category was job stability. When questioned whether or not "the job they hold or have held was acceptable and according to the wishes of there own parents" the answer from the majority (67.5%) was positive.

A high percentage of the parents in question (88.5%) stated that their children wanted to follow upper secondary education so as to continue their studies in tertiary education. Most of the respondents (96.0%) answered that they agree with their child's decision about their career. When questioned whether or not they encouraged their children to follow upper secondary education (lyceum) the responses were mainly positive (86.0%). When questioned about the main reason for this choice, parents focused on four major points: technical education usually limits opportunities for career development (45.0%); technical education prevents children from continuing in higher education (42.5%); technical education provides children with low quality education (40%); their children are achieving good grades at school, giving them the chance to continue their studies in higher education (35.5%). Several studies (Catri & Barrick, 1996; Jacobs, 2001; O' Connor & Trussel, 1987; Reich, 1983; Silberman, 1986) showed that vocational education has a low status because it is not a requirement for admission to universities. Vocational and technical education seems to offer no path in children's career development (O' Connor & Trussel, 1987). Thus, the Greek parents' beliefs are reaffirmed by earlier studies.

Only a small percentage of respondents (14.0%) answered that they would advise their children to follow technical education. When this group of parents were asked why they chose this type of education for their children, responses centred around the opinion that the job their children wanted did not require studies in higher education (3.5%) and that it is "something specific" (3.5%).

Almost all the respondents (95.5%) affirmed that usually they talk with their children about their job career. When parents were questioned about the source of information they usually get regarding the vocational guidance of their children, the replies focused on four areas: books and information guides (81.5%), conversation and constructive discussions with teachers (62.5%), media (46%) and internet (24.5%). Many respondents (81.5%) indicated the belief that the main factor to determine their children's career decision is that it is "interesting". Another factor that appears to have significant influence on child's job decision, according to 71.5% of parents, is the family environment. The other two that received the highest percentages are the school environment (54.5%) and the idols (52.5%).

The main hope of respondents (88.0%) was that their children choose a job according to their skills and abilities. Many parents (72.5%) hoped their children would decide to do something they really like and interesting whereas many answers (65%) indicated that the job decision of their children should be based on labor demand.

A high percentage of the respondents (66.5%) are concerned about the future career of their children and the high unemployment rate that the labor market has experienced in recent years. Most parents (96.0%) supported the view that they do not guide or advise their children to follow a profession that will lead to unemployment.

Many said that the job did not matter as long as one could be satisfied with it and is something that made them happy (75%). Other significant statements were that the children should choose a job that pays more money (56%), that is stable (74.0%), or that secures career development (62.5%).

Many parents (68.5%) believe that there is no occupational segregation of the labor force. Finally a high percentage of parents (79%) shared the view that the Greek educational system is ineffective, does not prepare pupils for work and certainly does not guide them into an appropriate occupation.

Influences and Comparisons of Selected Variables

Correlations between parental perception in children's education and career decisions with four other variables are presented in Table 6.

Table 6¹ *Parental Perception in Adolescents Education and Career Decisions as a Layer Factor for a Number of Selected Variables*

Variables	Pearson X^2	P
Children's grades at school	49.607	.000
Technical education provides children with low quality knowledge	4.444	.035
Technical education usually limits opportunities for career development	4.512	.034
Adolescents should choose a job that secures career development	5.360	.021

Correlation results confirmed the main determinants that lead Greek parents to guide their children to follow upper secondary education (lyceum), instead of technical education. These are the children's school achievements and that Greek technical secondary education provides low standard education and relatively few career opportunities. Indeed, Greek parents guide their adolescents to follow general education in order to secure job occupation, responsibility and social status (Kassotakis, 1991). In fact, our correlation results are consistent with those reached by Athanasou & Cooksey (2001). In their study it was found that the main determinant of an individual's interest in a subject is career interest. Thus, Greek parents' belief regarding technical education and their children's career decision is consistent with previous findings.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study show that parents believe the school vocational program to be an important issue that gives opportunities to children to visit different workplaces and so to grasp the needs of a rapidly developing labor market. "Career development is seen as the

¹ A description of the variables included in the correlation is given in the Appendix.

process of matching individual and organizational needs and determining development needs that arise from that match" (Holton & Trott, 1996, p.3). A career development system is essential for our time since all individuals have a share in the responsibility for their future careers and "Education is the only social institution which has increasing individual options as a major goal" (Holton & Trott, 1996, p.5). Findings of this study imply that Greek parents strongly advise their children to follow upper secondary education (lyceum). This advice is in agreement with their children's intentions. Parental preference of general education to technical and vocational education can be attributed to four factors: technical education usually limits the opportunities for career development; it prevents children from continuing in higher education; it only offers children with low quality knowledge; children who produce good school grades have the opportunity to continue their studies in higher education.

All the parents in question shared the view that Greek education is ineffective. It does not develop children's skills and abilities nor does it prepare them for entry into an appropriate profession. More specifically, based on the above findings, the following recommendations are offered (taking into consideration parents suggestions):

- There should be a state-sponsored tuition program and specific training on vocational education for parents. The vocational instructors can be secondary teachers with special training and appropriate experience on vocational education. The Greek central government must raise the level of awareness and must urgently address the issue of parent training in the domain of the workforce.
- Since a large proportion of Greek parents (46%) are getting information concerning the vocational guidance of their adolescents from the media, it is crucially important for technical and vocational education to be promoted through the mass media. Drawing the media's attention to technical and vocational education is a challenge requiring dogged persistence. Reporters and editorial boards must be educated about the value of technical and vocational education and persuaded to give vocational documentaries and long term occupational trends the attention they deserve. Highlighting technical and vocational education, together with encouraging career development, might be an effective formula to influence job selection.
- The school curriculum of lower secondary education is preoccupied with elements of general education that do not leave resources available for vocational courses and workshops. It is a matter of urgency that the Greek central government put on a more firm and regular footing on the school vocational program. Greek educational policy needs changes and requires coordination with the rapid development and progress of the labor market. The school vocational program should provide children with job skills, career education and higher thinking. It should identify the kinds of skills needed by the labor market and prepare the children for a wide range of occupations and a broader base of education content. Moreover, it is highly recommended that the school vocational course should begin from the early age of twelve.
- Formal classroom vocational teaching is important but as Greek parents and the labor market pressurize education to respond to a changing market place, more effective and efficient tools are needed. Since "youth experience considerable difficulty securing employment and developing careers" (Womble & Jones, 1996, p.1), regular visits of children to different workplaces are important so as to strengthen the role of education as a core means of preparing youth for work.

- Organizations and private enterprises must reveal their demands and needs to the State in order to enhance Greece's competitiveness. Vocational education programs must be kept up-to-date on the latest developments in industry. A competency-based curriculum, structured around industry's needs and standards, can create an efficient social environment that will offer individuals prosperity and job satisfaction (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). "Effective occupational education program development requires the capacity to specialize forums and focus on the core competencies to fit the local labor market needs" (Jacobs, 2001, p.191). Hence, Greece needs to develop education programs geared specifically to the labor market rather than academic ones.
- Since Greek vocational and technical education does not seem to have a strong professional identity, teachers of the school vocational program should be well prepared to teach new work-based education. Teachers need to be trained in workforce development, together with the knowledge-base related to education for the workforce and thus receive more practical, field-based experiences (Jones & Black, 1994). Central government in Greece needs to create vocational teacher education programs so that teacher educators may be trained on a subject-specific area: workforce education.

It must be recognized that this study has limitations and thus other aspects will require further investigation. The findings of this study cannot be used to generalize about the whole of Greece as it only analyzes a small sample from the Athens region. Analysis of additional data from more prefectures with contrasts between rural and urban areas may be necessary for comparison and confirmation of the results. Although this study has been a correlation survey it is not enough to establish cause and effect. The present study gives a base line for further research into the role of Greek parents in the career-planning of their adolescent children, against which the effects of a policy change could be measured over time.

In order to bring about higher productivity and to meet increased social needs, countries should concentrate more of their resources on human development. An injection of investment in education, particularly in the expansion of technical and vocational schooling, would improve the productivity of the labor force, allow education to adapt to new technologies more readily, accelerate personal development and thus boost the national economy. This research supports the view that, only when the leaders of Greek education recognize how investment in technical and vocational education enhances profitability and productiveness, could words such as efficiency, effectiveness and productiveness be used to describe the Greek school system. Education can only contribute to the development and growth of a country if it is both productive and effective.

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APPENDIX

Frequencies for variables in the analysis are presented in Table A1. Description for the variables included in the correlation analysis also follows.

Table A1. *Frequencies of Parental Perception and Expectation to Adolescent's Occupation*

Variables	Absolute frequency	Frequency (%)
Parental perception for the influential determinants of adolescents occupation		
Adolescent's interests		
Yes	163	81.5
No	37	18.5
Total	200	100
The family environment		
Yes	143	71.5
No	57	28.5
Total	200	100
School environment		
Yes	109	54.5
No	91	45.5

Variables		Absolute frequency	Frequency (%)
	Total	200	100
Adolescent's idols			
Yes		105	52.5
No		95	47.5
	Total	200	100
Parental expectations of the future adolescents occupation			
Their children choose a job according to their skills and abilities			
Yes		176	88.0
No		24	12.0
	Total	200	100
The children should choose a job that pays more money			
Yes		112	56
No		88	44.0
	Total	200	100
Children should choose a job that is stable			
Yes		148	74.0
No		52	26.0
	Total	200	100
Children should choose a job that secures career development			
Yes		125	62.5
No		75	37.5
	Total	200	100
The job did not matter as long as one could be satisfied with it and it is something that make them happy			
Yes		150	75.0
No		49	24.5
	Total	200	100

DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLES USED IN THE CORRELATION ANALYSIS

When parents encouraged their children to follow upper secondary education (lyceum) the variable took value 0, when not, it took the value 1. The variables used as main factors determining parental preference to upper general secondary education were: "technical education usually limits opportunities for career development" and "technical education provides children with low quality education". These variables took the value 0 when the parents said they would have encouraged their adolescents for one of the above reasons identified from the sample. When not, these variables took the value 1. The variable "adolescents should choose a job that secures career development" took value 1 when parents expected their adolescents to choose an occupation according in career development. When not, it took the value 0.

The variable "Children's grades at school" took the value 0 when the children's school achievement was "excellent", took the value 1 when the children's school achievement was "very good", took the value 2 when children's school achievement was "good" and finally, took the value 3 when children's school achievement was "no good".

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