

EDUCATIONAL & CAREER COUNSELLING IN GREECE

By STELIOS K. KRASSAS

Educational and Career Counselling (SEP) philosophy

In today's knowledge and information society, a combination of both general and specific knowledge that will lead our youths to their vocational success is becoming a sine qua non necessity. Educational and Career Counselling (SEP) is encouraging and supporting to the students, so that they will be able to plan their career easily from their path through today's complex educational crossroads.

The Pedagogical Institute, through its SEP Sector, aims in providing the necessary support and aid to the student's educational and vocational choices, through emphasising counselling as a SEP function, but also by providing students and counsellors with all available information regarding educational and occupational choices in our country. That way, it enriches educational process parameters and the education provided in our country.



Educational and Career Counselling implementation – Greece

The implementation of Educational & Career Counselling (SEP) in education is founded by Law 1566/85, in which the main principles of its implementation are stated. In particular, this institution is implemented in the 3rd grade of Junior High School and the 1st grade of Senior High School and *"its main target is the development of the students' personality, as well as informing them about career choices open to them, about the transitional stages of establish-ing a career and a harmonious entry into life and society"*. The student is supported throughout his/her career choice development so that educational and professional development through out the life span, from school to employment can be successfully facilitated.

The institution of SEP gains particular importance by Law 2525/97, article 10.1, as it contributes to the upgrading of its educational role according to modern social and economic situations. In particular, it is stated *"Educational & Career Counselling aims to provide students with assistance during the various stages of their development so that they are aware of their inclinations, develop their skills and seek their role in society"*. An innovation in the function of SEP has been achieved, according to Law 2525/97, constituted to the establishment of:

- 68 Regional Educational and Career Counselling Center's (called KeSyP) at every one of the 58 regions of the country, under the authority of the relevant Secondary Education Headquarters,
- 200 Offices of Educational and Career Counselling (called GraSEP) in 200 school units of Secondary Education,

- 1 Educational and Career Counselling Center (KeSyP) at the Ministry of National Education and Religions (YpEPTh), which functions as a model Center, under the supervision of the Directorate of Secondary Educational and Career Counselling Affairs of the Ministry,
- 1 Educational and Career Counselling Center (KeSyP) at the Pedagogical Institute, which functions as a supportive, coordinating Center.

The staff in each Educational and Career Counselling Center is:

- one (or more –according to the area population) Educational and Career Counselor who is a teacher, specialized in a one–year–long course in Counselling and Career Guidance, and
- one Information Expert who is a teacher with six months training in Information and Documentation on issues of Educational and Career Counselling.

One teacher who has been trained in issues of Counselling and Career Guidance on a six–month course staffs every Office of Educational and Career Counselling. The above SEP framework provides Counselling and guidance for students and young people under 25, while at the same time support their parents and teachers so as to be able to help them in turn, on matters related to their educational and career choices, and generally to their career development. Further, this framework promotes the cooperation of relevant services of education with other social partners (such as local authorities, parents or workers associations).

At the Educational and Career Counselling Center's young people not only have the opportunity of full Counselling support by the Counselors on matters of educational and professional choices, but also to search for information with the help of the Information Expert. Further, the Educational and Career Counselling Centers organize training programs for the support of teachers who are involved with the implementation of SEP in schools, as well as day–conferences and meetings on Counselling and Guidance topics. Finally, the Regional Centers are involved with the publication of informative leaflets, e.g. on the job market and the main professions of the residents of that area, and organize events to inform students, to which representatives of corporations and individual business professionals are invited.

The Offices of Educational and Career Counselling offer direct support students in matters related to Career Guidance. The students, who are already puzzled about their future, have the opportunity of full information on matters of education and employment through the implementation of SEP at class level. Further, the students can be supported in their inquiries, which involve them personally and are related to their educational and professional future. The Offices constitute the next immediate stage of support, which students need after the implementation of SEP in class, so that they can take decisions regarding their educational and professional future.

More generally, the Offices are where the initial search for information and the contact with the Educational and Career Counselling Regional Centers for a Counselling intervene. Finally, the fact that the Offices of Educational and Career Counselling are situated within the schools themselves is beneficial to students who want to search, to be informed, to be advised and to discuss matters with an expert each time they are confronted by issues concerning their career guidance.

Indeed, the implementation of Educational and Career Counselling at class level (3rd grade of Junior High School and 1st grade of Senior High School) ensures the familiarization of students with the adult world, and more particularly that of employment. Another aim is students' systematic practice of the decision–making process, and the management of educational and professional information, which concerns them directly.

For this purpose the students of the two above-mentioned grades have educational material at their disposal, which actively facilitates and supports the above-mentioned processes. The SEP Sector of the Pedagogical Institute renews this material every year.

Worth noting is that through Law 2525/97 emphasis is given to the psycho-pedagogical guidance of students so they can become capable of handling issues in their personal and professional development (the role of the student is now active), while at the same time, according to the introductory essay of the legislature, Career Guidance is considered to be an evolutionary process, which *"begins at school and is completed in the job market"*.

Further, according to the same law, the National Center for Vocational Guidance (called EKEP) is established, which operates under the joint authority of the Ministries of Education and Employment. It aims to ensure the success of the cooperation and communication of those agents who are involved in Career Guidance in Greece, and the effective support of their functioning.

The implementation of SEP in Secondary Education (3rd grade of Junior High School and 1st grade of Senior High School)

To implement Educational and Career Counselling in the 3rd grade of Junior High School one course per week is set-aside in the scheduled timetable throughout the academic year. In the 1st grade of Senior High School one course a week is set aside throughout the second four-month period of the academic year.

The two classes – particularly the 3rd year of Junior High School – are prominently guidance classes, because students are invited to take responsible decisions regarding their educational future, and start to plan the course of their professional careers.

To this end, students have educational material at their disposal, which can facilitate and support them to carry out the processes mentioned above. The following books are included in the material:

- EDUCATIONAL & CAREER Counselling: Getting Prepared for Life (**Student's and teacher's book**)
- EDUCATIONAL & CAREER Counselling: Planning my Future (**Student's and teacher's book**)
- STUDIES AFTER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: (**Information Guide for Junior High School students**)
- STUDIES AFTER SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: (**Information Guide for Senior and Technical High School students**)

Through the Educational and Career Counselling Center of the Ministry of Education, students of Senior and Technical High Schools also have access to the book CAREERS GUIDE that includes information on many of the professions in the current job market in Greece. Secondary Education teachers are responsible for the implementation of SEP in these grades.

Sector of Educational and Career Counselling (SEP)

The SEP Sector was founded within the framework of the Department of Secondary Technical Vocational Education of the Pedagogical Institute.

President: Dr. **Stefanos Tzepoglou**, PI Counsellor;

Members: Dr. **George Voutsinos**, PI Counsellor; Dr. **Nikos Iliades**, PI Counsellor; Dr. **Vassiliki Gizelis**, PI Counsellor; Dr. **Anastassia Kostakis**, PI Consultant; Secretary: Dr. **Aikaterini Kedraka**, Career Counsellor. The work conducted by the SEP Sector, PI's KeSyP and the School Bureau of Educational Orientation for the disabled and socially excluded, is supported by the following teachers, seconded from the regular

education to the PI: **Stelios Krassas** – MSc, Career Counsellor; **Niki Paisopoulou** – MSc, Career Counsellor, **George Papapanagiotou** – MSc, Network Administrator, **Georgia Pavlou** – MSc, Career Counsellor and Miss **Heleni Karametou** as secretary and collaborator.

Educational and Career Counselling Centre (KeSyP) of the Pedagogical Institute (PI)

The Pedagogical Institute (PI) Educational and Career Counselling Centre (KeSyP) has a unique task; that of collecting educational and vocational information, evaluating it, shaping it, updating it and offering it to the various Regional Educational and Career Counselling Centres (KeSyP) and School Bureaus of Educational and Career Counselling (GraSEP), either in print or in electronic format. Additionally, it produces material regarding the wider European area, since the borderless Europe offers its citizens the possibility of free movement of education, employment and residence. Since March 1999, PI's KeSyP has been moved to a new space, more suitable to its needs. The Educational and Career Counselling (SEP) Bureau for the Disabled and Socially Excluded is also located there.

Bureau for the Disabled and Socially Excluded

Since March 1999, the School Career Orientation Bureau for the Disabled / Socially Excluded has been operational within the PI's SEP Sector. This was founded within the framework of the relevant project, *"Study, planning and development of a School Career Orientation unit and a SEP Centre for the Disabled and Socially Excluded"*, which was part of Action 1.1.e: EPEAEK CAREER ORIENTATION, 2nd KPS. The Bureau offers information on career education and rehabilitation of these groups, and is an innovative PI function.

Additionally, the Bureau has the necessary infrastructure to support visits by KeSyP Counsellors, as well as any other interested party (disabled/socially excluded people and their agents; parental groups; teaching professionals; school counsellors etc). The Bureau also has the capacity to offer teleconferencing and electronic information provision to anyone with access to similar systems.

SEP and New Technologies

- Operation of the "Nestor" network, the Regional Educational and Career Counselling Centres (KeSyP) and the School Bureaus of Educational and Career Counselling (GraSEP)
- Nestor Networks website is a communication and information dissemination network, complementary to the Regional Educational and Career Counselling Centres (KeSyP) and School Bureaus of Educational and Career Counselling (GraSEP). Through it, users may:
 - find information regarding educational opportunities after Gymnasium, Unified and Technical Lyceum and Technical Vocational School;
 - find career descriptions in the Hellenic work environment, and thus get informed in the contemporary job market;
 - be updated in regard to Municipality-based Regional Educational and Career Counselling Centers (KeSyP), School Bureaus of Educational and Career Counselling (GraSEP) and local job markets;
 - be advised by online electronic versions of the Educational and Career Counselling (SEP) textbooks and various other information material, available online; find links to a huge number of other websites with additional information material.
- Development and maintenance of the SEP Sector website

- Management of the KeSyP and GraSEP database
- Management of a five-month SEP training seminar database
- Management of an educational and vocational information database
- Creation of educational information and printed material regarding the support of SEP personnel and structures

KeSyP and GraSEP Support

The SEP Sector and PI's KeSyP, beside collating and providing educational, counselling and information material, maintains an open, two-way communication with the rest of the KeSyP and GraSEP and their personnel, in order to support them in their various functions. Furthermore, it supports and aids SEP personnel by providing additional information in subjects such as mobility programmes, location of various experts, seminar organisation etc.

Training

Many teachers being asked to implement SEP in schools have little knowledge regarding SEP aims, philosophy and methodology, and therefore need to learn more. KeSyP personnel are able to cover these needs through seminars, in collaboration with PI's SEP Sector unit, or with other local authorities, specialising in Counselling, Career Counselling, Psychology, Job markets etc. More specifically, the SEP Sector and PI's KeSyP have supported personnel involved in implementing SEP, the teaching community (teachers and students) and the parents through:

- The training of 120 School SEP professionals, in collaboration with the Philosophy-Pedagogy-Psychology of the Kapodistrian University of Athens, and the Psychology Department of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, in the subjects of Counselling and Career Guidance through a post-graduate study programme;
- the training of 78 Secondary Education teachers in Collation of Information Material, in collaboration with the Athens Economics University and the Thessaloniki Librarianship TEI; and
- the training of 500 Secondary Education teachers in Counselling and Career Guidance, through collaboration with various University Departments throughout the country.
- Finally, the educational reformation and the new books that were published, created an immediate need to cover the gaps in SEP teachers training, as well as in students. Towards this aim, PI's SEP Sector supported a number of training activities that took place throughout the country.

SEP Sector's Collaboration with other Authorities

During its activities, PI's SEP Sector must communicate and collaborate with a number of other authorities that are also involved in topics relating to education, training, occupation etc. Therefore, the following collaborations have been developed:

Collaboration with the Counselling and Career Education Service of Cyprus

The collaboration of PI's SEP Sector with the relevant Cypriot authority was implemented within the Joint Hellenic-Cypriot Educational Mnemonium, after the relevant decision made by PI's Co-ordinating Council. The PI was also active in the successful organisation of the 1st Cypriot-Hellenic Counselling Conference that took place in Cyprus on November 27th and 28th, 1997. Furthermore, PI's SEP Sector was responsible for the organisation of the 2nd Cypriot-Hellenic Counselling Conference that took place in Sparta, on April 22nd and 23rd, 1999.

Collaboration with the Liaison Office of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki

This collaboration concerns the production of printed and electronic material relating to educational information.

Collaboration with authorities implementing activities relating to Career Orientation

Communication and collaboration in joint actions relating to Career Orientation with National authorities, such as OAED (Organisation for the Occupation of the Working Population), EIE (National Work Institute) and University and TEI Liaison Offices.

SEP Sector Participation in European Programmes

The SEP Sector is also active in various European Programmes, in order to implement ideas that will support its role:

- **Socrates**
- **Leonardo da Vinci**
- **Youthstart – Employment**

Research

Under the supervision of Dr. Stefanos Tzepoglou, SEP Sector President, the following research programmes were completed within 1999:

- A study of the factors that contribute to the shaping of adolescent attitudes and mentalities during transition into adulthood, regarding their educational and vocational choices.
- Mass media influence in information – shaping of vocational attitudes, mentalities and choices made by youngsters, regarding their entrance into the job market.
- A study of the influence exerted to Secondary Education students by:
 - School factors (teachers, other students);
 - Out-of-school factors (parents, social acquaintances); and
 - Work experience (visits and temporary placements in various job environments)
- Identification of secondary education students' attitudes towards the possibilities offered by Information Technology in regards to:
 - computer-aided search for information relating to educational and vocational options after school; and
 - changes expected by students in education – occupation, which come as a result of society's increasing use of Information Technology. Also, an analysis of student suggestions relating to the improvements of the information and orientation provided at secondary education schools.
- Studies relating to preparing disabled people and the socially excluded and introducing them into occupation.
- A study on the use of Information Technology and vocational counselling for the transition of the disabled and the socially excluded into occupation.

- A study of the framework relating to the vocational training and introduction into occupation of the disabled and the socially excluded.

Ageou Pelagous 1-3, EL 153 42 Agia Paraskevi – Tel: +302106013883 – Fax:
+3021106017422 – E-mail: tomeasep@pi_schools.gr – Web site: www.sep.pi_schools.gr