

Career Guidance:

A study of factors that influence students' choices for undergraduate studies

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Literature review

The Education in Cyprus

- The Cyprus Education:
 - Started from 1400 BC
 - From 1878 - 1960
 - From 1960 - 1974
 - From 1974 until today

Literature review (Cont.)

The Education System in Cyprus

- Primary School – 6 years
- Lower Secondary Education (Gymnasium) – 3 years
- Upper Secondary Education – 3 years
 - General Education – Unified Lyceum
 - Technical and Vocational Education
- Higher Education
 - Public Universities
 - Private Universities
 - State Institutions of Higher Education
 - Private Institutions of Higher Education

Literature review (Cont.)

Career Guidance within Public Secondary Schools

- Founded in 1964 – 1965
- In 1991 qualified counselors began to be employed
- In 1997 renamed as Counselling and Career Education Service
- Now employed 119 counsellors:
 - 112 spread across the 123 secondary schools
 - And 7 are based in the central offices
- Aims and activities:
 - Career guidance services
 - Help students, to solve personal, family and social issues
 - Teaching course on career and social education

Literature review (Cont.)

Career Guidance from an International Perspective

- The guidance-oriented school across primary and secondary education levels
- Portfolio Systems
- Building bridges with the world of work
- Career guidance as a cross-curricular responsibility of all school staff members
- Ensuring that career guidance personnel use people who know about the world of work

Literature review (Cont.)

The Cypriot Graduate and Labour Market

- 47% of Cypriots were tertiary educated
- During the academic year 2008-2009:
 - 79% of students further their studies in higher education
 - 51,5% of students study abroad (54.7% of them in Greece, 35.4% in UK and rest in USA and other European and third countries)
- In 2010:
 - The unemployment rate in Cyprus was 7.1%
 - The unemployment rate for the age group 15-24 was 16.7%
 - 1 out of 4 university graduate students is unemployed



Methodology

Project's Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between students' decisions regarding university courses and parents' expectations.
2. There is a relationship between public high schools career counselors and students' decision regarding university courses.

Methodology (cont.)

- **Participants:** 20 High School, final year students
 - 11 females and 9 males
 - Study covers all five Districts of Cyprus base on the population of students
 - 12 students live in Towns and 8 in Villages

District	Males	Females	Total
Nicosia	4	4	8
Limassol	3	3	6
Larnaca	1	2	3
Paphos	1	1	2
Famagusta	0	1	1
Total	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>20</u>

Methodology (cont.)

- **When:** from November 2010 until February 2011
- **Collection method:** snowball stratified sampling method
- **How:** semi-structure interviews conducted by the researchers at offices not at schoolsgrounds
- **Analysis:** using Qualitative software NVivo 9th Edition

Sample's Demographic Characteristics

- Students' last year Average Grade (out of 20):

Grade	Males	Females	Total
19-20	2	9	11
18-19	1	2	3
17-18	3	0	3
16-17	1	0	1
15-16	1	0	1
14-15	0	0	0
13-14	1	0	1

Sample's Demographic Characteristics (cont.)

- Educational Level and Occupation of Parents

Educational Level	Father	Mother	Total
High School Graduate	9	13	22
College Graduate	3	1	4
University Graduate	7	6	13
Postgraduate (Master) +	1	0	1

Occupation	Father	Mother	Total
Private Sector	8	7	15
Public Sector	5	3	8
Business Owner	5	3	8
Bank	2	3	5
No Job	0	4	4

Findings

- **Q1. Chosen course**

- *Did you decide which course you want to study for undergraduate studies? Which course is it?*

Chosen Course	Female	Male	Total
Architecture	3	1	4
Medicine	3	1	4
Accounting and Finance	1	2	3
Sports Science	0	2	2
Not yet decided	0	2	2
Classical Studies Greek Philology	1	0	1
Environmental Science	0	1	1
Law	1	0	1
Nursing	1	0	1
Psychology	1	0	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q2. Criteria affecting your choice**
 - *Which criteria affected your choice?*

Criteria	Female	Male	Total
I like this occupation	7	4	11
School lessons	5	5	10
This occupation has good future career prospects	3	1	4
I have the ability to do this occupation	3	0	3
It's easy to get a place at a University through Pancyprian Exams	1	1	2
High salary	1	1	2

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q3. Where do you prefer to work**
 - *Would you prefer to be employed in the public sector, private sector or set up your own business?*

Preference of work	Female	Male	Total
Public Sector	8	3	11
Private Sector	2	3	5
To set up my own company	1	3	4

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q4. Factors influencing students' choice**
 - *Which factors influenced you to choose this course?*

Factors	Female	Male	Total
My opinions and ideas	7	4	11
My family	5	4	9
School lessons	5	1	6
My friends	3	1	4
People in this profession	2	0	2
Television and Internet	1	0	1
The school counselor	0	1	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q5. Career counselor in the private sector**
 - *Have you visited a guidance counselor in the private sector?*

Have you visited a guidance counselor in the private sector?	Female	Male
No	7	7
Yes	4	2

The students who said Yes, answered the following questions:

Was your initiative or your parents?	Female	Male	Was one of the factors that influenced your course choice?	Female	Male
Mine	2	1	No	3	1
My parents	0	1	Yes	1	1
Both	2	0			

Were you happy with the quality of service?	Female	Male
No	0	0
Yes	4	2

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q6. Career test by Public Schools**

- *Did the career office of your school provide you with a career test? If yes , did you take it? If no, why?*

Did the career office of your school provide you with a career test?	Female	Male	Total
No	1	2	3
Yes	10	7	17

Have you taken it?	Female	Male	Total
No	2	2	4
Yes	9	7	16

From the 16 students who solved the test:

- 9 students agreed that the Career test influenced their choice
- 1 student shared that the test showed something very different from what she wanted to study
- 4 students did not remember the results and
- 2 students said that the counsellor of the school did not give them the results.¹⁸

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q7. Career test in the Private Sector**
 - *Have you taken a career test in the private sector?*

Have you taken a career test in the private sector?	Female	Male	Total
No	11	8	19
Yes	0	1	1

Only one student took a Career Test in the private sector but he did stated that it did not help him because it showed too many results.

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q8. Do you work**
 - *Do you work during the school year? During the school holidays? If so, has the work influenced your choice of the field of study which you will follow?*

Do you work?	Female	Male	Total
No	11	5	16
Yes	0	4	4

The students who said Yes, answered the following question:

Where?	Female	Male	Total
Computer store	0	1	1
Supermarket	0	1	1
With my father	0	2	2

One of the students who worked with his father said that this work experience influenced his study choice.

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q9. School placement work week**
 - *Which profession had you chosen during the school placement work week? Did this factor influence your study choice?*

I worked for	Female	Male	Total
Medical centre	4	1	5
Public School	4	1	5
With my father	0	3	3
Police	0	2	2
Accounting office	0	1	1
Architecture office	1	0	1
Bank	1	0	1
Construction Company	0	1	1
Law office	1	0	1

This experience influenced your choice	Female	Male	Total
No	2	6	8
Yes	9	3	12

From the 8 students who said that this experience did not influence their study choice is because they had chosen a place to go since it had a flexible week or because their friends were going there.

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q10. Discussion with parents**
 - *How often do you discuss with your parents your worries and ideas regarding your studies and your professional development? If you do not, why?*

How often?	Female	Male	Total
Often	5	4	9
Very often	4	4	8
Almost everyday	2	0	2
I do not discuss with my parents this matter	0	1	1

The student who said : I do not discuss with my parents this matter, mentioned that:

“We are not talking about these matters very often but, rarely. My parents try but I avoid it because I can’t and I do not like to discuss such things”

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q11. Role of parents**
 - *What is the role of your parents regarding your choice of field of study that you want to follow? Do they have a guidance role? Do they put pressure on you to study a course of their own choice? Is the decisions of the family taken as a team?*

What is the role of your parents?	Female	Male	Total
Guidance role	8	9	17
It's not so important	2	0	2
They always accept my ideas	1	0	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q12. Parents agree or disagree with students' choices**
 - *Did your parents disagree with your choice of the course that you have chosen? If they disagreed, how did you react?*

Did you parents disagree with your choice?	Female	Male	Total
Agree	11	8	19
Disagree	0	1	1

The student who said that his parents disagreed with him, mention:

“they disagreed with me because I did not decide what I want to do for my future”

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q13. Parents' pressure**
 - *Did your parents pressure you to study what they wanted?
Why do you think they did so?*

Did your parents push you to study what they wanted?	Female	Male	Total
No	10	6	16
Yes	1	3	4

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q14&15. Affected by brothers, sisters other relatives, friends?**
 - *Did your brother and / or sisters influence your choice? Any other relatives? Friends?*

Did your brother and / or sisters influence your choice?	Female	Male	Total
No	10	9	19
Yes	1	0	1

Did any other of your relatives influence your choice?	Female	Male	Total
No	10	9	19
Yes	1	0	1

Did your friends influence your choice?	Female	Male	Total
No	8	6	14
Yes	3	3	6

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q16. University choice**
 - *Will you chose a specific university to study because your best friends have chosen it?*

Will you choose a specific university to study because your best friends have chosen it?	Female	Male	Total
No	11	8	19
Yes	0	1	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q17. Visit school counselor**
 - *Have you visited the counselor of your school during your upper secondary education? If so, how many times and for what reasons? If not, why?*

Have you visited the counselor of your school?	Female	Male	Total
No	0	2	2
Yes	11	7	18

The students who said Yes, answered the following questions:

How many times?	Female	Male	Total	For what reason?	Female	Male	Total
1 time	4	1	5	For choosing school lessons	11	6	17
2-3 times	2	4	6				
3-4 times	2	1	3	Future studies	5	3	8
5 times	1	0	1	Information for occupations	1	1	2
10 times	1	1	2	To spend my time	1	0	1
Everyday	1	0	1				

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q18. School counselors influence the students' choice**
 - *Did the counselor of your school influence your choice of field of study ? If yes, how? If not why?*

Did the counselor of your school influence your choice of field of study?	Female	Male	Total
No	11	9	20
Yes	0	0	0

Why?	Female	Male	Total
I knew what I wanted to do	5	2	7
The counselor did not explain to me what I have to do	0	3	3
I did not discuss this matter with the counselor	2	1	3
I did not visit the counselor	0	2	2
I do not trust the counselor of my school	2	0	2
The counselor did not have the knowledge to help me	2	0	2
The counselor did not have time to help me	0	1	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q19. The services of counselors are helpful**
 - *Do you think the services of the counselor of your school are helpful? If yes can you give us an example? If not, why do you think so?*

Do you think the services of counselor are helpful?	Female	Male	Total
No	5	3	8
So and so	4	4	8
Yes	2	2	4

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q20. Quality of school counselor services**
 - *What do you think about the quality of the counselor' services of your school? Is he/she willing to help students? Does he/she have a good knowledge of the subject?*

Do you think the counselor of your school has a good knowledge of his/her job field?	Female	Male	Total
Yes	5	6	11
So and so	5	3	8
No	1	0	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q21. Students suggestions**
 - *Generally, what is your opinion about the counseling and guidance services in public schools and how can this be improved?*

What is your opinion about the counseling and career guidance services in public schools?	Female	Male	Total
Helps students but need improvements	6	4	10
Does not offer what is needed	4	3	7
They do not know how to treat students	1	1	2
It's excellent and does not need improvement	0	1	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q21. Students suggestions (Cont.)**
 - ***Generally, what is your opinion about the counseling and career guidance service in public schools and how can this be improved?***

How can the counseling and career guidance service in public schools be improved?	Female	Male	Total
We need another 1-2 counselors at schools because are not enough	7	4	11
Counselors need more training	9	0	9
Counselors must give more attention to the needs of students	3	3	6
Presentations and seminars	3	2	5
Personal attention	1	3	4
Creation of a career guidance lesson	2	0	2
Research	1	0	1
They must separate the psychology counseling and career guidance	1	0	1

Findings (Cont.)

- **Q22. Students suggestions**
 - *Generally, what is your opinion about the role that should parents should play in relation to their children's decision on what study course to choose?*

<i>What is your opinion about the role that parents should play in relation to their children's decision on what study course to choose?</i>	Female	Male	Total
Guidance role	11	8	19
I don't know	0	1	1

General Findings

- **The occupation of parents affects students' choices**

Where would you prefer to work?	Parents' Occupation		
	Bank	Business Owner	Public Sector
Private Sector	1	3	0
Public Sector	1	1	7
To set up my own company	2	2	0

General Findings

- The students' grades affect their choices

Students' Course Chosen	Students' last year Average Grades (out of 20)					
	Grade 13-14	Grade 15-16	Grade 16-17	Grade 17-18	Grade 18-19	Grade 19-20
Accounting and Finance	0	0	0	0	1	2
Architecture	0	0	0	1	1	2
Classical Studies Greek Philology	0	0	0	0	0	1
Environmental Science	0	0	0	1	0	0
Law	0	0	0	0	0	1
Medicine	0	0	0	0	0	4
Not yet decide	1	0	0	1	0	0
Nursing	0	0	0	0	0	1
Psychology	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sports Science	0	1	1	0	0	0

General Findings

- The students' grades affect their wiliness to visit a career counsellor in the private sector

Have you visited a guidance counselor in the private sector?	Students' last year Average Grades (out of 20)					
	Grade 13-14	Grade 15-16	Grade 16-17	Grade 17-18	Grade 18-19	Grade 19-20
No	1	0	1	3	2	7
Yes	0	1	0	0	1	4

General Findings

- **The students' grades affect their discussion with parents regarding their studies and their professional orientation**

Discussion with parents	Students' last year Average Grades (out of 20)					
	Grade 13-14	Grade 15-16	Grade 16-17	Grade 17-18	Grade 18-19	Grade 19-20
I do not discuss with my parents this matter	1	0	0	0	0	0
Often	0	1	1	1	2	4
Very often	0	0	0	2	0	6
Almost everyday	0	0	0	0	1	1

General Findings

- **The educational level of parents affects students' choices**

Where would you prefer to work?	Educational Level of Parents			
	High School Graduate	College Graduate	University Graduate	Postgraduate (Master) +
Private Sector	3	1	0	1
Public Sector	6	2	3	0
To built my own company	0	0	4	0

Testing Project's Hypotheses

1. There is a relationship between students' decision regarding university courses and parents' expectations.
 - Accept
2. There is a relationship between public career counselors and students' decision regarding university courses.
 - Decline

Conclusions

- Students seem to be influenced a lot by parents
- Parents persuade their children to further their studies in the higher education – for this reason 79% of high school graduate students get a place at Universities and 1 out of 4 of them are unemployed
- The Counseling and Career Education Service in the Public Schools need improvements – need to give more personal attention to students and advice them which course to choose

