ADULT EDUCATION

Critical

Issues

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Table of Contents

Editorial Note

With the dawn of the new year, our journal enters its fourth year. It is a fact that challenges, problems, and unpleasant situations are increasing instead of decreasing, spreading to more corners on the planet instead of being limited. Adult Education, in its critical and emancipatory perspective, is emerging as more necessary than ever. In this issue we find remarkable articles that embrace different but crucial issues in Adult Education. These articles cover a wide range of topics concerning issues of educational policy, online education, employment and lifelong learning policies, transformation theory, occupational practices, all of them examined under the lens of a critical approach.

In their article **Kostourou and Papageorgiou** examine the educational dimension of midwifery in professional education programs of this professional field in Greece. Although the educational dimension of midwifes role is rather rather than profound the question is whether midwifes fully understand all the dimensions of this role, their importance, and the conditions for its appropriate exercise. To explore this question twelve in-depth semi-structured interviews with midwifes - trainers and eight interviews with men and women who had participated in childbirth programs in Greece were conducted. What emerges as a key conclusion is that midwifes need more support for the educational part of their role, but also strengthening their practice as trainers by integrating the basic principles of Adult Education into their programs.

Giannakopoulou's article concerns the role of communication in forming online learning communities. The research presented is based on a qualitative approach and more specifically on fourteen semi-structured interviews with undergraduate and postgraduate students of Hellenic Open University. Based on the main findings of this research Giannakopoulou reaches the conclusion that learning is a social process of knowledge construction and cannot be effective if it is deprived of the dimension of communication and interaction within an appropriate social context, such as that created in online learning communities.

In their article **Tsiboukli and Efstratoglou** deal with the issue of employment and occupational prospects in Greece and its connection to lifelong learning policies. Applying the Oxford Global Economic Model, they estimate that during the period 2022-2030 the total employment rates in Greece are expected to decrease by 3,4%. This forms a paradox; in a period of economic growth, we have no new jobs created (jobless growth). They suggest facing more critically lifelong learning policies, and mapping more carefully the job market calling also to have a deeper view on those who rarely participate in training programs and are considered also to dropout from formal educational processes.

The issue of Mezirow's perception of the role of emotions in Transformation Theory is one of the most crucial and interesting debates for more than thirty years among scholars of this field. **Karakou and Karalis** examine this issue based on content analysis of the texts of Jack Mezirow. Their findings show that Mezirow linked emotion to the key elements of his theoretical construction (object and means of transformation, phases of transformation, and the role of adult educator). According to the research findings Mezirow managed to develop a comprehensive theory, keeping the boundaries of adult education distinct from psychotherapy.

In her article **Virvidaki** states that both public discourses and dialogue between adult learners are in many cases confined to competitive and assertive claims, leading to a reduce the potential of the dialogical act. Virvidaki suggests specific strategies for the adult educator, to render learners more sensitive to elements of uncertainty implicated in the process of collective rational inquiry. In this way students can activate their ability to handle more intricate and multidimensional discursive processes,

beginning to transform the restrictive stance towards the dialogical act, that they had manifested at the beginning.

In his article **Vassilopoulos** seeks the contemporary role and objectives served by the transfer of European lifelong learning policies for vocational education and training in Greece, through the analysis of European policy texts. What emerges is that European Union developed its interest in lifelong learning after 1990 in the context of an instrumental logic where the emphasis was placed on (vocational) education and training structures which were considered to be more effectively linked to serving the needs of the labor market. In the Greek case, on the one hand, we are not aware of the impact of the transfer of European policies on employment and the economy. On the other hand, the achievement of the objective of social inclusion and the fight against social exclusion within a system characterized by low participation and aggravation of social inequalities is in doubt.

The next issue of our journal will be dedicated to future orientations of the Transformative Learning (TL). The community of TL scholars has highlighted the theoretical exploration as a "theory in progress", consisting of a continuous development and elaboration of the perspectives it includes. Although there is a general agreement among the scholars of Transformative Learning that its defining characteristic is the aim of deep transformation, and that the related theoretical views constitute a living theory, there has not been a thorough collective discussion about how these concepts are understood. This issue will form the core of the next issue, in which important scholars of this field will present their views.

Professor Thanassis Karalis

Professor Katerina Kedraka

Editors of *ADULT EDUCATION Critical Issues*

Midwives as Adult Educators: An Investigation of Midwives' Perceptions about the Educational Dimension of their Profession

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Abstract

This article deals with the educational dimension of Midwifery, as manifested in the context of perinatal education programmes in Greece. Despite the internationally recognized value of childbirth education in reducing perinatal mortality and morbidity, and despite the rich activity of midwives in terms of perinatal education, their role as adult educators has received limited scientific attention and support. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether and to what extent midwives teaching in perinatal programmes perceive their role as educators, as well as whether and in what way they are prepared for this role. It also investigates whether and what form of training midwives receive to their role in perinatal education. The study followed the specifications of qualitative design and data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with twelve (12) midwives - trainers in perinatal education, as well as with eight (8) women and men who have participated in childbirth classes in Greece. The findings highlight the need to further support midwives in their educational role and to enhance their educational practice by integrating the principles of Adult Education.

Keywords: perinatal education, midwives' educational role, trainers' training, adult education, women's education

1. Introduction

Perinatal education today involves a holistic approach to care and support, which actively involves the pregnant woman, the partner, and the family. It includes preparing women for childbirth, counseling/supporting breastfeeding mothers, building up for the transition to parenthood, and promoting family health (Polomeno, 2000). In essence, perinatal education has replaced the passing on of knowledge and experience surrounding childbirth and motherhood from woman to woman within the family-neighbourhood context. In this new context, the passing on of knowledge is performed by the midwife.

The move of childbirth from home to hospitals and the detachment of labouring women from their familiar surroundings as well as the transformation of pregnancy and childbirth from private to public affair, led to the need for informing and guiding women through a normalized framework. The midwife, already on the woman's side since antiquity, undertakes the role of satisfying the need for support, information and guidance through the educational dimension of her profession. The role of midwives, despite the intense medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth, is emerging as crucial in reducing perinatal mortality and morbidity (WHO, 2019). Appropriate midwifery education, both at the level of clinical practice and at the level of training as educators in childbirth/maternity programmes is underlined by a variety of international organizations. For instance, the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN) have detailed work plans for the training of midwives as educators, highlighting the contribution of professional competence in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality (Barger et al., 2019).

The integration of the principles of Adult Education is highlighted by the above organizations as a necessary element for the qualitative upgrading of perinatal education programmes. In particular, according to the latest guidelines of the WHO (2019), the role of midwives in health systems is essential and central, given that the informed practice of midwifery is proven to contribute towards women adopting more positive attitudes regarding health at such a critical moment in their lives. Emphasis is also laid on the importance of proper training and the development of midwives into knowledgeable health professionals, who will be able to cater fully and purposefully to the couples' needs for support and counselling. The literature review reveals that the educational role of midwives in the context of perinatal education programmes has received limited attention. The role of midwives as adult educators is usually approached indirectly, through the exploration of the various aspects of the programmes. Rarely are midwives-educators given a voice to talk about their role and how they experience it in practice. Nolan (2010) is one of the few researchers to highlight these programs as a prime form of adult education and to point out the deafening silence in the scientific field about the use and incorporation of the principles of Adult Education. Although the activity of midwives in perinatal education programs appears intense in Greece and beyond, it has not been investigated or associated with the field of Adult Education. Midwives in perinatal education programs, as will be seen below, are called upon to take on a much more substantial role than that of an informant. And their trainees are much more than mere "audience".

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study draws on Kegan's (2003) theoretical proposal to investigate the dimensions of the role of midwives as adult educators in the context of perinatal education. Kegan (2003), based on the theory of constructivism -according to which reality is not something that "happens to the individual" but rather is something created by her- in the context of the developmental theory, described a dynamic view of the evolution of individual's consciousness, which evolves through five stages:

- First stage (about 2-6 years old): Imagination plays a leading role in the way the person perceives reality. The subject, making irrational correlations through the prism of imagination, fails to produce logical cause-and-effect relationships.
- Second stage (around 7 years old until adolescence): The individual begins to clarify who she is and what she wants. Desires are perceived as objects with duration. She expresses an egocentric and short-sighted attitude as she tries to manipulate her environment to satisfy her needs.
- Third stage (end of adolescence onwards): Development of the individual's perception of the social whole to which she belongs. This awareness is expressed through the pursuit of commitment to individuals or ideologies. Egocentrism gives way to subordination to the group, its interests, and values. The actions and perceptions of the individual are oriented towards the "meeting" with the community.
- Fourth stage (conquered by few adults): The individual can be accountable and in control of her internal state. Experiences are now perceived outside the self, as objects of observation and reflection as the subject has now constructed a Self, which is not defined by the individual's relations with the people around her but is self-determined. However, an encounter with elements of an opposite value system poses a challenge to the subjects' composure.
- Fifth stage (conquered by a minimum of adults): Weakening of dichotomous thinking. The individual can combine the opposites but also find the unity that pervades them on a universal level. This ability allows the adult to deftly navigate between opposing elements.

Kegan argues that the transition from one level to another presupposes the objectification of experience, that is, its view beyond and outside of ourselves, not as subject -that is as a state

of being- but as an object under observation and contemplation. As Kokkos (2019) points out, what matters in the transition from one stage to another is not the change in what the subject learns but the change in how she learns. The change of epistemological structures does not take place suddenly and completely. Instead, the process develops through constant regressions in which the individual uses elements of the previous and/or next stage in order to re-frame the new reality and to achieve balance.

This theory is useful in the context of the present study for the following reasons: Pregnancy and the transition to parenthood are a pivotal moment in life, characterized by gradual changes in the individual's life -what Mezirow (2000) refers to as "disorienting dilemma" - which requires the revision of previously accepted viewpoints and presuppositions. In other words, it is a period of life in which the person seeks tools to reconstruct her reality, as described by Kegan. Thus, the educator-midwife is called upon to assume a very important role: To understand the level of development which the adult learner has reached and to adapt the educational programme accordingly. She is called to create those conditions which will support the individual in the reconstruction of her consciousness, taking into account the stage of development which the learner has reached at that moment. The mere provision of information, therefore, according to Kegan, proves ineffective for the adult learner, as it does not contribute to their development and transformation. However, Kegan's theory is also important in terms of the educators' level of consciousness and the degree to which they can identify their own dysfunctional perceptions (or elements of the subject according to Kegan) that are inserted into the educational process.

3. Literature Review

The literature review refers to studies investigating perinatal education courses within the context of adult education and the role of midwives as educators respectively. Some studies focus on the perinatal programs' participants' educational needs. Such an example is the study of Norling-Gustafsson et al., 2011). Although oriented towards the investigation of the degree of satisfaction of couples who have participated in perinatal education programs, in demonstrating the degree to which the programs respond to the learning needs of the participants, it also highlights the importance of midwives being informed concerning their role as educators and reveals the processes that evolve in the context of perinatal courses as adult education programmes. Other studies demonstrate the need for perinatal education programmes to be more adapted to the participants' learning needs, as those needs are highlighted in the theories of adult learning (Fabian et al., 2005).

Other studies look into the educational methods and the content of perinatal programmes. What is found in research is the prevalence of a teacher-centred approach. With the aim of sterile information transmission, the educational methods in perinatal programmes tend to include lecturing and a limited use of active / participatory learning techniques (Nolan, 2010). The lack of acquaintance of midwives with participatory learning strategies and teaching methods, as well as of organizational educational principles (e.g. appropriate number of participants) are reported as common causes for adopting this approach (O'Sullivan et al., 2014).

The evaluation of perinatal education programs is another important part of the educational process, which as pointed out in the literature, has been largely neglected (Stamler, 1998). In this way, there is often a discrepancy in the degree of satisfaction reported by the participants in the courses and the midwives' perceptions (Norling-Gustafsson et al., 2011; Renkert & Nutbeam, 2011; Stamler, 1998). Theodoridou (2005) is the only author in the Greek literature, who refers to the importance of self-evaluation of the midwives' work in perinatal education through critical reflection, indeed suggesting its integration into the midwives' training curriculum.

O'Sullivan et al. (2014) underlines the limited interest of the scientific community in exploring the preparation that midwives receive to respond to their educational role in perinatal education programs. In their study, they note the lack of preparation and support that midwives receive in preparation for their educational role and emphasize the need to introduce continuing training in this area. According to Theodoridou (2005), the relevant training in Greece often takes on an informative character, thus deviating from its purpose, i.e. the enrichment of the knowledge and skills of the trainees. She points out the non-correspondence of the content of the training programs with the midwives' learning needs, as they perceive and articulate them. In addition, she points out that this discordance suggests a significant deviation from the principles of Adult Education, where the identification of content and learning methods according to the needs of the adult learner is central to the success of education (Papageorgiou, 2022).

4. Methodological Approach

4.1 Purpose - Research Questions

Based on the above, the need to understand how midwives perceive their role in the context of perinatal education programs is highlighted. Specifically, the following questions are investigated in the context of this article:

• How do midwives understand their role in perinatal education courses?

• To what extent do they understand their role as an educator?

• Do they receive trainers' training and what kind to fulfil this role?

For the study, we will focus on midwives and perinatal courses in Greece.

4.2 Methodology

The present research follows a qualitative approach. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2020), a qualitative approach proves to be extremely useful for the holistic examination of a phenomenon. The aim is to deeply understand and investigate a phenomenon - the role of midwives as adult educators and how they experience teaching in perinatal courses. The chosen methodological approach allows for greater flexibility (Robson, 2011), as it allows the research tools to be adapted during the research and to include emerging dimensions to be explored. In Greece, the role of midwives as adult educators remains invisible. Therefore, a quality design allows the emergence of unknown variables that are included in this dimension of the obstetric profession.

As a data collection method, the semi-structured interview was chosen. According to Robson (2010) and Creswell & Guetterman (2020), the semi-structured interview permits more flexibility in the course of the interview, it encourages the development of participants' thoughts and feelings and consequently, it allows the emergence and exploration of new themes and dimensions. Because of the above, the interview guide's questions revolved around how midwives perceive their role but also encouraged them to explore topics (e.g. challenges, dilemmas, participation, and exclusion issues).

The research involved twelve (12) midwives with experience in the private sector and voluntary providers of perinatal education, in the organisation and conduct of perinatal education programmes. Four (4) of these midwives are also midwife educators. The research also involved eight (8) participants/trainees in such programs. The interviews of this target group were designed and implemented after the analysis of the midwives' interviews.

4.3 Limitations - Reliability of the Research

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the method of triangulation was applied, drawing data from different types of informants (midwives-educators and participants in

perinatal education courses) (Cohen et al., 2018). The purpose of investigating the dimensions of the trainees' participation was on the one hand to determine whether the aims of the perinatal education courses, as described by the midwives, are communicated to the trainees. On the other hand, the aim was to investigate whether the midwives' perception of the effectiveness of the programs is verified in the views of the participants. The midwives who participated in this research come from private and voluntary sector organizations in Athens and thus, the resulting conclusions cannot be generalized.

5. Findings

5.1 The Purpose of Perinatal Programs and the Role of Midwives

For many midwives in the study, their role in perinatal education is inextricably linked to the obstetric dimension of their profession. In fact, in many cases, the same midwife who trains a pregnant woman will assist her in childbirth and during breastfeeding. They are therefore called to act simultaneously in both dimensions, the educational and the obstetric, which usually develop in the environment of a maternity centre or hospital. In this light, the role that almost all midwives identified themselves with was that of "supporter". As Margarita[1] points out, "midwifery means being next to the woman, with the woman, that is our role". Also, empowerment emerged as an important purpose of the courses. "I empower. Empowerment. This is my role. I strengthen their will to breastfeed", said Eleni.

Most midwives interviewed do not think they are educated. They believe that education is not directly related to the content of their programs. For Alexandra, the concept of education seems to be negatively charged, perceived as a process that is permeated by strictness and alienation. The midwives therefore seem reluctant to uptake the role of the educator, which they have associated with negative schooling experiences. "I think it is education but not in the strict sense. It's a relationship with a woman. It is a deep relationship beyond the sterile knowledge that is made in formal education". It has to be noted here that midwives' perception of not having an educational role in their perinatal courses stems not only from their negative experiences in education but also from their perception of education only in its formal form. The lack of training in Adult Education seems to affect the midwives-educators' view of their role in the context of perinatal programs, as they are not aware of non-formal education as part of education.

On the other hand, there are midwives' interviewees who do realize their educational role. For example, Stella identifies herself partly as an educator, but cannot fit her work regarding guidance and empowerment into the image she holds for the educator's role. "Initially you are an educator but later, when you establish a closer relationship with the woman, you coach, empower, and give psychological support." Indeed, when it comes to the interviewed participants in perinatal programs, they tend to view them indeed as educational. Accordingly, during the interviews, prospective parents refer to these programs using words related to learning. Indicatively, Faye states that the "lessons" she attended in a perinatal provider "got her *learning* one level higher" while Anna feels that she was "*educated* in breathing techniques".

The context in which midwives practice their profession - in all its dimensions - presents Greece with some important particularities. Specifically, the perinatal period in Greece is extremely medicalized. This fact is reflected in the excessive number of caesarean sections (WHO, 2016), as well as in the significantly large number of women who choose to give birth in private maternity hospitals. The rate of caesarean sections in public maternity hospitals in Greece is 40% and in private ones 60%, when according to the WHO (2016), the medically acceptable rate is 15%. This inevitably affects the success of breastfeeding to the extent that

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[1] The names used in this article are pseudonyms.

a caesarean section can negatively affect the establishment of breastfeeding (Iliodromiti et al., 2018). Therefore, for most midwives in this study, the context surrounding childbirth in Greece suggests the first and greatest challenge. As they state, "women leave empowered" from perinatal courses and then give birth in a maternity hospital where none of what they have learned is validated" (Dorothea), where "their power is being stolen" (Nota). In light of this, midwives seemed reluctant to see themselves as "educators", considering themselves to be "much more" than that: Supporters providing courage and empowerment in a struggle. From the above, it can be seen that the lack of training in the principles of Adult Education prevents midwives from recognizing the complex role that they perform as educators of adults (Jarvis, 2010), which includes teaching, guidance, and empowerment.

5.2 Challenges

Despite the individual differences, all midwives identify "the Greek reality" mentioned above as a great challenge in their role as educators. As Eri explains, "I feel like I have an invisible enemy somewhere ... you want to work properly, to support childbirth with safety and respect and love. But you are called to accomplish this in a country and a system where things are very very bad, very invasive, without respect ... the opposite ". For some midwives, the Greek reality "is inextricably linked to the "unclear role of midwives in the health system" (Matina). In addition, Dora explains that the position of perinatal education in Greek society, and in particular in the Greek health system, contributes to the limited understanding of its importance. The result of this, as she states, is the perception of perinatal education by obstetricians as competitive or even hostile. The above perception also appears in the interviews of the participants. For example, Anna describes "..the Greek system as far as pregnant women are concerned is rotten and fragile. This is what I experienced in my first birth and this is what the midwives gave us to understand: How we will cope with this system during labour".

Interviewed midwives at the beginning of their professional life, considered the setting of boundaries with trainees as being particularly challenging for them. Characteristically, Eri refers to "the limits... that also require training, you have to know how to set limits with love and generosity, it is difficult and you have to handle this gently because if you fail let's say to start the session at 7: 30p.m you'll end up going back home at 2: 00a.m ... ». And this is another element that stresses the need to further acquire skills related to adult education.

Another issue that emerged from the analysis of the data relates to the characteristics of the participants as well as the composition of the groups. Sophia, for example, refers to issues related to the management of gender differences within the groups: "For me, the challenge is the dad. Fitting men into the group is a challenge because men ... because we live in this patriarchal society, have more taboos and should ... Because in the average Greek family, they have learned, you are a boy, do not cry, you are a boy, you are strong, you are a boy so you do not change diapers, you do not wash dishes so in general ... I generally feel, or I may be biased I don't know, that it is difficult ". Once again, this highlights the need for midwives undertaking perinatal education programmes to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and competences pertaining to adult learning, such as knowledge of the characteristics of adults as learners, participatory teaching techniques and group dynamics (Karalis & Papageorgiou, 2012).

The importance of Kegan's (2003) theoretical proposition on the developmental stages of adult consciousness and on the role of the educator in distinguishing the level of consciousness the adult learner has reached that particular moment and her readiness for transformation is reflected in Stella's description, who states that "Sometimes I meet people who are steadfast in their views and they try in every possible way to challenge what I say. So I find myself doing the job of a browser let's say. I try to prove to them, using this or that

research, that what they are telling me is not true and this is a challenge for me because I am trying to prove the obvious, what is self-evident to me but not to the other person. Some of the participants often react ... ".

5.3 Educational Methods

Several interviewed midwives apply active educational methods (such as role play, experiential exercises, and storytelling) as a way to support, on the one hand, the building up of their groups and on the other hand to encourage their active participation. Respectively, interviewees who were participants in such groups emphasized the importance of active educational methods and their contribution towards learning through the perinatal course. As Maria describes: "... we did everything… dancing, singing, experiential activities, everything. It was an incredible experience; it all got me one level ahead". In contrast, different interviewees, participants in perinatal courses, pointed out their experience of perinatal courses where there is a prevalence of lecturing and of accumulating "useless" information (Vaso). Once again, this confirms the importance of midwives knowing and implementing adult education participatory methods and, when this is not the case, of the need to train midwives in the principles of adult learning.

5.4 Education – Training – Professional Development

Although all midwives-interviewees have attended vocational training, no midwife has received training specifically for her role as an adult educator. Most, however, seem to be looking for training programs to acquire tools that will help them meet the multidimensional challenges of their role as adult educators. This latter dimension is by no means at the level of the conscious. In other words, midwives do not seem to connect the emerging challenges that they try to meet through training with their role as adult educators. The training concerns the organization of perinatal education programs, counseling, psychology, pedagogy, group development and management, yoga, etc.

Those educators-midwives who have participated in training after the completion of their undergraduate studies in Midwifery on their initiative to expand their scientific knowledge about their educational role consider the preparation they received at the undergraduate level for teaching in perinatal courses as non-existent. On the contrary, for those midwives-interviewees who have not participated in professional development courses, the basic elements of verbal communication included in the undergraduate Midwifery curriculum are considered as useful enough for their educational practice. This finding is in agreement with O'Sullivan et al. (2014), who found that midwifery educators who have pursued further training offer a more holistic approach to pregnant women and their partners without focusing on a sterile transfer of information.

6. Discussion

6.1 Midwives' Perceptions of their Role in Perinatal Education

The role of midwives in perinatal education and the way they perceive it is considerably influenced by two elements: The obstetric and clinical dimensions of their profession as well as the context in which they are called upon to unfold these dimensions. The unfavourable medical context in which they are called to practice their profession significantly affects the way they perceive their role. The participating midwives see themselves mainly as a «supporter» of the woman, as being "with the woman", or "on the side of the woman". For most it seems that childbirth is a continuation of the lessons but also the point where their success is evaluated. After all, as most midwives-interviewees report, the success of breastfeeding and a good start in parenting presupposes a positive childbirth experience. A

very similar approach of midwifery educators about lessons and childbirth is also found in other research (e.g. Nolan & Hicks, 1997, Otogara et al., 2017).

However, in the present study, achieving a "dignified" delivery and success in nursing after the end of the course is a bold move. Midwives in Greece seem to link the lessons with childbirth outcomes and nursing much more intensely and with significant anxiety, due to the unfavourable medical context within which they are called to educate and in which pregnant women give birth.

Still, the interest and dedication that midwives in this study show to their group participants is a key asset that, accompanied by the necessary training in adult education, would make midwives particularly good educators, as this element encourages adult educators to take on a person-centered approach and to be open to the voice and needs of their learners (Papageorgiou, 2008).

6.2 Midwives' Perceptions of their Educational Role

From the data analysis emerged the feeling that midwives, despite teaching adults, do not consider their role in perinatal programs as educational or they seem reluctant to define their role as such. In addition, it seems that their personal experiences from school life and how they perceive and define learning themselves constitute an unprocessed element, which as Kegan (2003) argued remains at the level of the subject, i.e. it is not a critically considered experience. This ultimately affects the way they perceive their role. In this light, there is an ambiguous attitude towards how they approach their adult audience, sometimes taking on the role of "parent" and sometimes "of the peer", trying to "persuade" and sometimes "giving the stimulus" for the participants to pursue their quest. This contradicts the perception of participating women and men in the courses, who regard these programs clearly as educational. They consider that they are being educated. Bron's and Jarvis 's (2008) theoretical proposal on "multiple identities" and the fact that the adult educator can now work in different contexts, as long as she has a conscience and dedication to her educational work, could be helpful at this point.

The need for midwifery educators for training in the field of Adult Education permeates the collected research data whether explicitly or implicitly. This need is manifested implicitly through their active participation in professional development. They tend to spend significant time and money on seminars and programs seeking essentially -although not consciously- Adult Education tools to meet the demands of their role as educators.

7. Conclusion

Midwifery educators, therefore, are looking for tools that will enable them to meet the challenges accruing from their role as adult educators. In the absence of a coherent framework that would provide all the tools an adult educator needs, midwives borrow tools from the field of Psychology and Pedagogy. It could be argued that the participating midwives in the present research seek Adult Education without knowing it. They seek to meet with the wealth of the theoretical and practical tools of the field without this pursuit taking place on a conscious level. But all their needs and their educational aspirations verify this very presumption.

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Communication as a Prerequisite for Forming Online Learning Communities: a case study

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Abstract

Many researchers and educators have emphasized the importance of forming and developing online learning communities. Moreover, the leading role that the forms and the contents of communication between learners have in the creation and functioning of these communities is stressed. In this paper we present and comment on s, the findings of a research project that studied the aforementioned communication issues between students of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, at the Hellenic Open University. The analysis of the empirical data of this research, shows that the role of communication in the educational activities in which the subjects of our research were involved is extremely weak and consequently the formation of online learning communities is rudimentary.

Keywords: online learning community, distance learning, communication

1. Introduction

The main inquiry of the research project the findings of which are presented and commented in this text, concerns the forms of communication that were developed among students participating in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, offered by the Hellenic Open University by distance education methods.

The theoretical framework for the investigation of this question was composed of three perspectives that approach and analyze the factors, which, among other equally important ones, shape the effectiveness of adult distance education and they have been sufficiently analyzed in the relevant literature. The first perspective concerns the formation and operation of online learning communities, the second one the interaction that develops in distance education between learners as well as between instructors and learners, and the third perspective concerns the role of communication in distance education and the technological means that mediate this communication.

2. Conceptual Framework
2.1 Online Learning Communities

Researchers and educators have frequently emphasized the importance of shaping and developing communities within online learning environments (Du et. al. 2010; Palloff & Pratt, 2007a).

An online learning community can be defined as a group of people who utilize the internet and suitable applications to communicate and collaborate among themselves with the goal in constructing and exchanging knowledge (Palloff & Pratt, 2007b).

The most commonly used and popular computer software applications include both synchronous and asynchronous communication programs, as well as file storage and distribution programs. However, a prerequisite for harnessing the potential of these communities in online learning environments is the appreciation of their significance by the learners themselves since communication and collaboration, both among students and

between students and their instructors, are essential for the creation of online learning communities (Kohls & Schümmer, 2014).

In addition to the previous ones, as it has been set by Du et al. (2010, p. 121) "Compared to other learning communities, the online learning communities has some special characteristics in terms of interactivity, collaboration, trusting relationships, and communication media".

This means that an online learning community is actualized when learners feel a connection among themselves as well as with their instructor; show signs of communicative behaviors which aim at reducing social and psychological distance between themselves; share common interests; trust each other, and willing to support each other; they actively involved in every available form of two-way communication; and pursue common learning objectives (Rovai, 2002a). In our view, these terms situate the notion of online learning communities within the sociocultural approach to learning which was developed by Vygotsky (1978) and his successors.

Three elements are now considered crucial for the creation and development of online learning communities in related literature: the interaction of participants in a learning process, the communication among learners and between learners and their instructor, and the technological communication and educational tools that mediate interaction and communication (Du et al., 2010).

2.2 Interaction in Distance Education

The concept of interaction in distance education is defined from two theoretical perspectives: communication theories and learning theories (Woo & Reeves, 2007). Communication theories define interaction as the process through which individuals and objects mutually influence each other, and when this process has a positive effect on learning then interaction becomes meaningful.

Learning theories, on the other hand, define interaction about case-specific learning environments. Behaviorist theories of learning, for instance, define interaction in terms of stimuli, responses, and reinforcements provided by the mutual effects of their elements whereas theories of social constructivism focus on these interaction elements that contribute to the creation of meaning, such as dialogue and communication within learning communities. Therefore, the definition of interaction depends on how learning is defined.

Accepting the conceptual multiplicity of the interaction, Thurmond and Wambach (2004), summarized the relevant literature and identified four types of interaction in distance education learning activities: (1) interaction between learners and the instructional materials (2) interaction among learners themselves (3) interaction between learners and their instructors and (4) interaction between learners and the technological tools employed in the educational process. The first three forms of interaction are common in both conventional and distance education, though with different qualitative characteristics in each of these forms of education. The fourth type of interaction is exceptionally important, especially for educational programs which include software packages in their instructional materials or make extensive use of the internet.

The importance of interaction in distance education has been emphasized by many researchers since it is considered one of the most important processes in the educational process while at the same time the concept of interaction in distance education has been the focus of many studies (Muirhead, 2000; Tuovinen, 2000).

2.3 Communication in Distance Education

Various representations of the communication process may be found in the relevant literature, each of which based on different assumptions or definitions of the concept of communication itself (Cobley & Schulz, 2013).

What is clear, however, is that every communication which involves learners, trainers, technological tools, and fields of learning is an extremely complex process directly dependent on the context in which it develops. According to all available data, neither simple linear representation of communication process (transfer of information from a sender to one or more receivers through a medium) nor representations of the diffusion of communication (the spread of information and its reception by potential recipients) seem to effectively represent the communication process that is taking place in distance education activities. However, we may find representations of the communication process which incorporate essential characteristics of their framework as well as the social negotiation of meaning in an effort to better interpret the complexity of this process. For example, Schirato and Yell (2000, p. 1), adopting Bourdieu's theoretical analyses of human practices and activities, define communication as "...the practice of producing meanings and negotiating these meanings within the cultural framework of those involved in communication..." In other words, communication practices always develop within a cultural framework and are shaped by it.

From a similar theoretical approach, Kress (1988, p. 4-5) offers the following clarifications concerning the concept of communication.

First, communication is about meanings rather than about information. By making such distinction I wish to include matters such as attitudes, social relations, individual feelings, social positioning of sender and receiver, as wee as those things normally thought of as an information – statements about the physical and social worlds… Second, communication is about the production and consumption of meaning in actual processes of communication. Therefore, attention will need to paid to consumers of meaning and to their activity in this process as myth as to producers of meaning. Third, the processes of communication take place in a socially and culturally formed world. Hence communication never involves 'just individuals' expressing 'their' meanings. The meanings are produced and consumed by individuals who are already socially and culturally shaped and who draw on their meanings of their culture and social groups. Fourth, the processes of communication are much more and other than the 'sharing of meaning', or the 'mutual construction of meaning'. Societies consist of multiplicities of social and cultural groupings, and interactions between and across such groupings are likely to involve contradiction and contestation as they are to involve 'sharing'… So, fifth and last, the processes of communication are likely to be based on difference and on the resolution of difference at one and the same time.

Given that the relevant literature suggests that communication is essential for the development of a sense of community, the integration of various options of communication can be seen as an integral component for the establishment of an online learning community (Dawson, 2006; Rovai, 2002b). At the same time, however, for an effective functioning of an online learning community, it is necessary among the topics of communication of the participants issues related to the content of education and their relevant obligations as well as their peer support availabilities to be included.

Discussing issues related to the content of education and their relevant obligations, learners exchange information, express thoughts, and ideas, ask and answer questions about the content of their lessons, share ideas for the organization of their work, asses their efforts or comment among themselves about the responses to assignment questions and the solutions

to exercises. Communications among participants in a learning community about their availabilities to support their peers in whom they express their sympathy for problems, provide support in difficulties encountered in solving problems, demonstrate solidarity and emotional support, even discuss issues not directly related to their studies contribute to the creation of an atmosphere which reinforces collaborative learning.

In any case, Wood and Smith's (2005) assertion that a learning community requires a minimum number of communicative exchanges among its members is plausible given that simply accessing online content or reading forum posts does not support the development of a social presence or identity among fellow members, and as a result, does not contribute to the building of a learning community.

3. Communication Tools for Distance Education

In the last decades, there has been a rapid evolution in communication technologies and an intensification of their use with analogous, in extent and intensity, consequences in distance education (Fevolden & Tømte, 2015).

While traditional distance education utilized conventional communication technologies such as the telephone and fax, to facilitate interpersonal communication after the 1980's technological advancements, among them satellite systems, teleconferencing software, internet chat applications, asynchronous online discussions (forums), and many more made the "face-to-face" distance education possible, allowing both auditory and visual contact between learners as well as between learners and their instructors (Keegan, 2001). The transition to wireless communication brought about a "wireless revolution" in distance education, often referred as e-learning, which bridged the geographical gap that separates students from the educational institutions, the educational teams and the instructors.

Given the fact that all of us are becoming increasingly familiar with the use of various and different forms of communication, it is reasonable to assume that the choice of the communication medium is determined not only by our preference for a particular medium but also by its availability and its effectiveness in each learning situation (Sahasrabudhea & Kanungo, 2014).

One of the distinctions in the communication media that it has been established is between synchronous media, which offer opportunities for direct communication and asynchronous media, in which a period of time elapses between the reception of a message and its response. It is widely accepted the assumption that through the use of technological means for communication, whether they are synchronous or asynchronous, some elements of non-verbal communication are lost to varying degrees. (Anzari & Pratiwi, 2021; Stodel, et. al. 2006).

However, rather than focusing on assumptions that basic elements of human behavior change when new technologies mediate human relationships, it is preferable to consider how these change through the mediation of new technologies (Chambers, 2013). In any case, the rapid development of new information and communication technologies and their combined use with the development of new technological means requires a constant revision of "human relations."

On such a ground many studies have been conducted in recent decades, aiming to assess the effectiveness of information and communication technologies in learning. These studies have concluded that the primary contribution to learning comes from teaching methodology, while technology serves as an important but mediating tool. Therefore, in the context of distance education, the focus should not be solely on the technological tools themselves, but primarily on the educational content and teaching practices provided that both of them are specified on the basis of the self-efficacy needs of the adult learner in the processing of cognitive issues and in the gradual acquisition of knowledge (Lionarakis, 2006).In addition, educators are

required to possess the necessary knowledge and skills which are needed for the effective use of information and communication technologies in the teaching process, in combination with the necessary skills for promoting collaborative learning among learners.

Whatever the case may be, the e-learning technologies have undoubtedly changed the behaviors of people during the processes of education and learning as well as their attitudes towards them.

Finally, it should be noted that studies on the advantages and disadvantages of synchronous and asynchronous communication media in online learning programs do not reveal substantial differences between them concerning substantial aspects of communication both among learners as well as between learners and instructors.

Taking all of the above into consideration, we decided instead of focusing our interest on the most suitable forms of communication in distance learning, to first examine, in the context of Greek settings, the intentions, views, and forms of communication of participants in online learning programs, and this has been attempted in the research presented in this paper.

4. Methodology of the Research

As previously mentioned, the research reported here focused on aspects of communication which was developed both among themselves and with their instructors by students following a distance education program.

The data were collected from undergraduates and postgraduate students of the Hellenic Open University who had just completed distance education courses. Fourteen (14) students participated in our research, which were selected so as to form a representative group that allowed us to put forward indicative conclusions and to highlight facts from their communication, as well as to trace the significance they attribute to communication both among themselves and with their instructors during their studies.

Our sample is a purposive or a judgment sample, formed by selecting individuals on the basis on their willingness to participate in our research, the number of distance education courses they had attended and the researcher's subjective assessment of their eagerness to provide information, express thoughts, or conveys emotions about the phenomenon under investigation. In contrast to random samples, which aim at selecting to select individuals who are representative of various characteristics of a population, a purposive sample focuses on choosing individuals with characteristics that effectively contribute to the specific research (Patton, 2015). Therefore, a purposive sample is not random and does not follow a systematic sampling method or has a specific sample structure; thus, there is no need to specify a minimum number of subjects. The probabilities of error in each purposive sample cannot be calculated, and the representativeness of the sample within the target population is not guaranteed. Consequently, the generalization of our findings to the entire target population may not be valid, and this represents a limitation to the validity of the present research.

The research data were collected during autumn of 2022 through semi-structured interviews. The interviews included questions related to communication acts of students both among themselves and with their instructors, aiming to explore the forms, frequency, discussion topics, and significance they attribute to communication during their studies. Through the analysis of the data offered by the answers to these questions, it can be traced the contribution of communication with the specific characteristics in shaping the conditions necessary for the creation of an online learning community. The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method for analyzing qualitative data, seeking to identify, analyze, and interpret structures of meaning or "themes" found in research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As put by Clarke & Braun (2017, p. 297), "A key feature of the method is its flexibility in relation to research questions, sample size and composition, data collection method, and

approaches to identifying meanings" through the analysis of qualitative data. In a few words, thematic analysis involves the following steps: (1) transcription of the interviews or narratives, (2) studying and identifying excerpts that provide information related to the research question, (3) understanding the meaning of these excerpts and assigning conceptual labels (data coding), and (4) determining themes in which the conceptual labels are grouped (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

5. Research Findings

From the analysis of the interviews with the aforementioned method, interesting findings emerged. These findings are briefly presented below, accompanied by illustrative excerpts from the interviews on a case-by-case basis, while providing introductory comments for each of these findings.

5.1. The Quest of Communication

The students of our sample, despite the fact that they recognize the value of communicating with each other, made little effort during their studies to establish a consistent communication with their fellow students utilising the asynchronous communication forum that they had available from the university.

Participant 4: "*...Personally, I used the forum for exchanging opinions and materials very little because I noticed that only a minority of my class was responsive to this particular means of communication. …personally, I have made little use of the forum's facility to exchange ideas and material with my fellow students, as after few initial attempts I found out that only a minority of them was involved in this particular medium of communication. There were some attempts to exchange teaching materials, but there was no substantial communication, and most students did not follow up so as to be generated an opportunity for constructive dialogue.*.."

Participant 5: "*…Yes, I made some attempts to communicate through the forum, but the students who come in and follow the discussions are not more than five or six from the whole class of nearly thirty. It would be very useful if there was some way to engage more fellow students for dialogue and exchange of views...*"

Participant 9: "*I have not had the chance to collaborate with my fellow students through the forum participating in a discussion or submitting a group work. Although the University forum offers opportunities for discussion groups, I have the impression that they are not encouraged, and their use is not promoted by the instructors. Any form of relationship among learners in our group through the forums is rather limited, if not non-existent at all...*"

5.2. The Need for Communication

According to indications that emerge from the analysis of respondents' answers to corresponding questions, an objective need for communication is created in the online programs, which in our case seems not to be covered by the forum offered by their program of study, and as a result the official forum has been replaced by other social networking programs and mainly by Facebook. A bias can be assumed here against the institutionalized forms of communication, the interpretation of which, however, requires further research.

Participant 4: "… *I rarely used the forum of our program. Just some posts in the forum. We, in our class, mostly used a Facebook group we formed where we exchanged information among ourselves …*"

 Participant 7: "*… Although I participated a couple of times in a discussion which took place in the forum of our program of studies, finally, the only thing that served me was the personal communication I have had with fellow students, either by phone* whenever necessary *or through social media, mostly Facebook...*"

Participant 10: *"… Yes, we communicated with each other for the absolutely formal requirements. However, if our forum was working supportively, I and other fellow students would not have created communication alternatives on social media…"*

Participant 2: *"…I joined a Facebook group created by fellow students to communicate and exchange material, and we also communicated frequently via personal emails about all the issues we are concerned in our studies…"*

Participant 3: *"…I didn't have a Facebook account, but this year I joined a group created by our fellow students and from there I learned a lot of information about our studies…"*

Participant 5: *"… I occasionally join Facebook groups to communicate and share material with my fellow students. These groups have formed by students according to the course of studies we are following. Less frequently, we communicate via emails…"*

Participant 8: *"… I used emails a lot and, to a large extent, social media…our studies forum is not convenient for me…"*

Participant 11: *"…Throughout my studies I tried to have regular communication with my fellow students. I joined Facebook groups, I followed websites run by fellow graduate students and I kept an eye on few other websites managed by study groups from other universities…"*

Participant 12: *"…I am a member of a group on Facebook … I am constantly on Facebook, and I often receive messages from our group about our studies... This is very useful…"*

5.3. Doubts about Communication

Just like in traditional educational settings, we also come across students in online learning programs who are hesitant to interact with others in the social milieu that their coursework creates. As a result, they either decline to communicate in both directions with their teachers and fellow students or they question the value of communicating in any way when it comes to their academic pursuits (Dabaj, 2011).

Participant 6: *"… No, I didn't communicate with any of my fellow students because I didn't want to … I didn't feel comfortable sharing my views publicly. However, I was reading the questions and answers being shared on the forum of our program of studies…"*

Participant 3: *"… I didn't have any particular communication with my fellow students... I'm a little embarrassed to be publicly commented on... this kind of communication through forum is a bit impersonal... I've happened to be in a discussion of fellow students who were "slandering" a fellow student about her questions in the forum. I wouldn't want such a thing for myself…"*

5.4. Communication of Students with their Instructors

As revealed by our data, the primary forms of communication between students of our sample and their instructors or their supervisors were telephone discussions and email exchanges through their personal emails.

Participant 4: *"… Only for coursework I use the communication forum of our program studies ... for questions or various inquiries I prefer communication with colleagues or instructors via email or even by phone…"*

Participant 6: *"No, I didn't use the communication forum of our program of studies... I preferred telephone communications and email exchanges…"*

It seems that even in online learning face-to-face communication is the one that enjoys the preference of the studies employing, however, facilities offered by the internet.

5.5. Forms of Communication

From the discussions developed during the interviews of our research, it was found that the students do not consider that asynchronous communication contributes to the creation of any form of learning community. They expressed in many ways a clear preference for synchronous forms of communication mostly in video conferencing.

Participant 1: *"… It would be much more useful and constructive if, for example, the possibility of video conferencing via Skype was offered, either for the content of our study or for providing additional clarification and material and even for exchanging views among students and instructors..."*

Participant 2: *"…I believe that the forum of our program of studies does not encourage initiatives. Communication between students would be preferable through scheduled video conferencing sessions, where productive exchange of opinions can take place among students and between students and instructors...*"

Participant 4: *"... I encountered difficulties in making use of our forum especially when searching something I needed … let alone to communicate and discuss with the fellow students in our group..."*

5.6. Participation of Instructors in Communication

Many comments of the research participants expressed in their interviews indicated that the majority of their instructors do not attempt to transform the group of students of their course into an online learning community giving the necessary importance to communication among students as well as between students and them.

Participant 2: *"… I wouldn't say that our instructors, speaking in general, have encouraged us to ask for reading materials from other colleagues or request their opinions or even their assistance on our study-related matters...*"

Participant 5: *"… Unfortunately, our instructor has never encouraged us to communicate among ourselves... at least, it has never happened to me. I wish it would happen... I wish they not only motivate us but also facilitate us in some way…."*

Participant 7: *"…Our instructor neither motivated us nor showed us how to communicate with each other… I don't think anything like that has ever happened to our study group me … I would definitely remember it if it had happened…"*

6. Discussion

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the research findings reported above.

A first conclusion is that the role of communication in the educational activities that the subjects of our research participated was extremely undervalued mainly mediated by social media, which almost exclusively utilize forms of asynchronous communication. Asynchronous communication precisely because it does not require the simultaneous online presence of students provides great flexibility in attending online educational programs. Many students prefer this form of communication perhaps because they are studying while working, meeting necessary family duties and fulfilling their various social obligations. Therefore, they have the opportunity at their convenience to exchange messages with other students or their instructors and at the same time have as much time as they need to think and work out questions, answers and comments in the dialogues going on between them.

However, it is the modern communication offered by video conferencing and messaging applications (forums, chat rooms, etc.) provided by specially designed platforms, as in the case of studies pursued by the students who participated in our research that contributes dynamically to building and developing online learning communities by creating the necessary

social environment and shaping the conditions for active discussions. In addition, modern communication eliminates the sense of isolation in many cases that students feel which is many times inherent in online learning.

Nevertheless, studies of the advantages and disadvantages of the two forms of communication, asynchronous and synchronous, in online learning programs do not point to essential differences between them regarding the issue of communication that mainly interested us. Therefore, instead of focusing our research efforts on the most appropriate form of communication, we believe that, particularly in the Greek case, we firstly have to look at the intentions, opinions, and forms of communication of the participants in online learning programs and this is what our research attempted at a primary level.

A second conclusion that emerged from our research data is that the formation of online learning communities by the students who participated in our research was either rudimentary or virtually nonexistent. This conclusion seems to be a logical consequence of the previous one.

As many researchers of online learning emphasize, the role of communication in the formation and development of learning communities is particularly important and consequently the existence of active learning communities is one of the essential factors that determine the effectiveness of online education programs.

From a socio-cultural perspective, which theoretically guides our research, knowledge is socially constructed, and communication is shaped and embedded into a social context. Therefore, the ways in which knowledge is acquired and exchanged constitute an essential dimension of any learning context. This is particularly relevant in online learning, where the nature of knowledge and the approaches to it are under ongoing investigation (Alavi & Duftner, 2005).

In online learning, the social construction of knowledge is primarily carried out through the mediation of written texts exchanged online, and learning takes place through various forms of communication. Knowledge and learning gradually coincide through communication and the cooperation that communication fosters.

The online discourse produced through asynchronous communication cannot be separated from the technology itself, but also from the social context it shapes. Broadly speaking, the technological and social dimensions of online learning are intertwined and inseparable. The technological dimension emerges in the specific context formed by the technological possibilities, while the social dimension is constructed through the communication, dialogue, and cooperation of the participants in a learning community. From this perspective, the conclusions mentioned above are not at all encouraging for the effectiveness of the online training programs offered in the context created by the structure and operation of the study program explored although without requirements of generalizations. But as preliminary findings, they need further research to confirm, deny, or amend them.

7. Instead of a Final Conclusion: Past and Future

Whenever we consider issues related to distance education, a crucial question arises: What could be, and actually is, the contribution of the internet to learning? Addressing this question Bruckman (2002) rephrases the question by replacing the word "internet" with the word "book". However, the answer to the question, "What can be the contribution of the book to learning?" seems self-evident, since for all of us "book" is synonymous with "learning."

Nevertheless, the essential answer is not only not self-evident but also not simple and it dependents on many individual answers. Which book? Read in what social context? Since not all books are the same, and not all reading contexts are the same either. Learning through the

use of written texts involves not only the reader and the text but also the social context of the reading. The text, the book, the learner, the instructor, and the social context within which they exist and work together constitute a socio-technical system. That is, an amalgamation of technologies, people, and social practices, which, if well-designed and sufficiently functional, can support learning. Therefore, the question about the contribution of the internet to learning does not allow for a simple answer. The internet is an element of a new socio-technical system that offers excellent learning potentials. Hence, just as we are interested in which books, through what activities and with which social practices will support the learning of specific knowledge, we are also interested in which programs, through what activities and with which social practices, will support online learning.

Learning is a social process of knowledge construction and cannot be effective if it is deprived of the dimension of communication and interaction within an appropriate social context, such as that created in online learning communities. It is essential to underline, that communication is not just a rational and mechanistic process, nor a simple exchange of information. The feelings, attitudes, behaviours and relationships of the individuals involved in a communication process also determine its effectiveness (Jaques, 2001).

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Employment and occupational prospects and Lifelong Learning in Greece

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Abstract

The present paper addresses employment and occupational prospects in Greece, in the period 2011-2022, highlighting the dynamic, stagnant and declining occupations and it also addresses employment and occupational prospects in the near future (2022-2030). The role that Lifelong Learning can play in an environment of abrupt changes is also discussed. The study reveals that in the period 2011-2022, the total employment rates in Greece increased by 1.0%, with the creation of 43,002 new jobs. A large number of jobs was created for general and keyboard clerks, health professionals, and information and communication technology professionals but on the other hand, a large number of jobs were destroyed. Therefore, the employment and occupational prospects in Greece shortly require further attention. The estimates presented in this paper concern the period 2022-2030, in a two-digit occupation code and they are derived from the application of the Oxford model (Oxford Global Economic Model - GEM), which is managed by NKUA, in the framework of its eLearning program. In this period, according to relevant estimates, the total employment rates in Greece are expected to decrease by 3.4%, with a loss of 143,998 jobs in total. This negative development, which is expected to take place in an environment of increased production (estimates of the Oxford model), indicates a paradox that is a period of economic growth that is not followed by the creation of new jobs (jobless growth). In light of this evidence, employment and occupational prospects and Lifelong learning are interlinked and often considered a favored topic for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and politicians. As occupations, dynamic, stagnant, or declining, include certain tasks and skills, their evolution (and mainly in the dynamic ones) provides the necessary information areas in which the long-term strategy of Lifelong Learning should target. However, there seems to be a distance between policy, strategy, and action. The paper suggests a more careful mapping of the job market, the lifelong learning programs, and the trainees' prospective profiles. It also addresses the need to focus on those who rarely participate in lifelong learning programs and are considered to also be the dropout rates from formal educational processes.

Keywords: Employment, Occupations, Lifelong Learning, Prospects

1. Introduction

The present paper addresses employment and occupational prospects in Greece, in the period 2011-2022, highlighting the dynamic, stagnant, and declining occupations of this period. It also addresses employment and occupational prospects shortly (2022-2030). The role that Lifelong Learning can play in an environment of abrupt changes at both, the quantitative level (increase and decrease in demand for certain occupations) and the qualitative level (differentiation of tasks, knowledge, and skills in occupations), is also discussed. The restructuring of employment in occupations takes place under the influence of various factors that can be clustered in three major categories: a) the **supply of occupations** (educational

level of the population, immigration[2]), b) the **demand for occupations** (demand for goods and services, technology, globalization, internationalization of trade, sectoral structure of the economy) and c) **institutional factors** that affect both the supply and the demand of occupations (minimum wages, collective bargaining, social benefits). In addition, their relative effects concerning both individual decisions for seeking a specific occupation and the job market itself with the emphasis it places on creating new jobs[3], are also discussed.

2. Occupational Developments in the Years 2011-2022

In the period 2011-2022, the total employment rates in Greece increased by 1.0%, from 4,124,218 million people in 2011 to 4,167,239 million people in 2022, with the creation of 43,002 new jobs. In this period, in addition to the factors that affect occupational development, three significant crises also emerged:

a) the **financial crisis**, that turned into a fiscal and more general economic crisis (2008-2013),

b) the crisis of the COVID-19 **pandemic** (2019-2020) and

c) the **energy crisis**, that started in the year 2022 and continues up to date[4].

In addition, the limited increase in total employment rates was also accompanied by a significant restructuring in the occupations (Chart 1), with a large number of them increasing their potential for employment, others decreasing it, and a limited number showing marginal changes, that indicate a relative stability for employment.

A large number of jobs was created for general and keyboard clerks (41), health professionals[5](22), drivers and mobile plant operators (83), information and communication technology professionals (25), business and administration professionals (24), personal service workers (51), teaching professionals (23), and on a lesser degree to other occupations. On the other hand, a large number of jobs were destructed. Amongst them building and related trade workers (71) are included, due to a significant reduction in the construction sector, market oriented skilled agricultural workers (61), due to the general trend in the last decades of a constant decline in this sector as well as due to the ageing of this population of workers (large number of elderly persons). In addition, the need for other clerical support workers (44) declined, mainly due to restructuring in office work, as well as the need for cleaners and helpers (91), hospitality workers (14), retail and other service managers and health associated professionals (32). It is significant to clarify that employment rise in years 2011-2022 was minimal due to the dynamics of economic development. The factors that seem to have affected the restructuring of the occupations were mainly changes in demand for goods and services, technology and the improvement of population's educational level that might partially explain the arousal of scientific professions. In total employment prospects expanded in a very low degree with the factors that seem to affect the restructuring of occupations to be mainly changes in the demand for goods and services (consumer standards), technology and educational improvement of the population.

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[2]   Among the multitude of papers written on immigration, the interested party can refer to the excellent paper by Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan (2013), that concerns the history of immigration and its effects on modern economies and societies.
[3]   For a more extensive discussion of the factors affecting occupations see Efstratoglou and Kritikidis 2023, Efstratoglou, 2018 and Oesch, 2013.
[4]   For a more extensive presentation of the crises and their effects on economy, society and the near future until 2035, see Petrakis (2023).
[5]   The large increase of (22) health sector professionals and in particular that of (222) nurses and midwives, does not fully correspond with reality but it is due to data recording issues by ELSTAT as a number of them until 2021 were recorded as (32) technicians and in particular as (322) technicians in the health sector and for this reason show a significant reduction in their employment.

Thousents

Occupation	Value
41 General and Keyboard Clerks	108,2
22 Health Professionals	87,9
83 Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators	36,6
25 Information and Communications Technology…	29,6
24 Business and Administration Professionals	28,9
51 Personal Services Workers	23,6
23 Teaching Professionals	20,0
21 Science and Engineering Professionals	17,7
53 Personal Care Workers	16,6
54 Protective Services Workers	15,7
94 Food Preparation Assistants	15,5
34 Legal, Social, Cultural and Related Associate Professionals	14,1
96 Refuse Workers and Other Elementary Workers	8,5
33 Business and Administration Associate Professionals	7,0
12 Administrative and Commercial Managers	6,3
0 Persons not classified	5,4
74 Electrical and Electronics Trades Workers	4,9
26 Legal, Social and Cultural Professionals	3,9
92 Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Labourers	3,6
93 Labourers in Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and…	0,4
62 Market-oriented Skilled Forestry, Fishery and Hunting…	0,3
35 Information and Communications Technicians	0,0
82 Assemblers	0,0
73 Handicraft and Printing Workers	-0,2
11 Chief Executives, Senior Officials and Legislators	-0,6
95 Street and Related Sales and Services Workers	-0,9
43 Numerical and Material Recording Clerks	-2,1
13 Production and Specialized Services Managers	-4,1
31 Science and Engineering Associate Professionals	-9,3
52 Sales Workers	-9,9
42 Customer Services Clerks	-10,6
81 Stationary Plant and Machine Operators	-11,3
72 Metal, Machinery and Related Trades Workers	-12,1
75 Food Processing, Woodworking, Garment and Other…	-29,1
32 Health Associate Professionals	-46,2
14 Hospitality, Retail and Other Services Managers	-51,3
91 Cleaners and Helpers	-51,3
44 Other Clerical Support Workers	-52,8
61 Market-oriented Skilled Agricultural Workers	-55,1
71 Building and Related Trades Workers (excluding…	-67,5

Graph 1. *Job creation and destruction of occupations in years 2011-2022*
Source: ELSTAT, Labor Force Surveys, edited by us

3. Occupations, Tasks and Skills

A detailed description of the tasks required in various occupations is provided in the ISCO – 08 classification, while their degree of use (in two-digit occupation code) in Eurofound 2016. In the Eurofound report (2016) the degree of use of tasks in their general categories (physical, intellectual, social, methods, tools, and machines used in the work process) and their analytical categories are presented. These categories correspond with the categories of skills to determine both the tasks and the skills required for each occupation. Occupations that in the above period demonstrated a relative dynamic[6] (in the first positions of Chart 1) in Greece require mainly intellectual tasks (information processing, solving problems), social tasks (providing services, selling, teaching, management), and to a lesser extent some physical tasks (strength, dexterity). At the same time, the majority of these occupations show a high degree of autonomy in the exercise of their tasks and a relatively high level of teamwork, except drivers and mobile plant operators (83). In addition, except drivers and mobile plant operators (83) as well as personal service workers (51), the rest of the occupations that demonstrated a high dynamic, use of information and communication technologies to a high degree (use of computers and related programs) which in turn requires high digital skills.

4. Employment and Occupational Prospects in the Period 2022-2030

The employment and occupational prospects in Greece shortly[7] require further attention. The estimates presented in this paper concern the period 2022-2030, in a two-digit occupation code and they are derived from the application of the Oxford model (Oxford Global Economic Model - GEM)[8], which is managed by NKUA, in the framework of its eLearning program. In this period, according to relevant estimates, the total employment rates in Greece are expected to decrease by 3.4%, from 4,167,239 million people in 2022 to 4,023,241 million in 2030, with a loss of 143,998 jobs in total. This negative development, which is expected to take place in an environment of increased production (estimates of the Oxford model), indicates a paradox that is a period of economic growth that is not followed by the creation of new jobs (jobless growth). The result of these developments should probably be the restructuring of occupations. The great majority of the occupations are expected to show reductions in employment possibilities with only a limited number of them expected to demonstrate an increase (Chart 2). However, even in the case of an increase, this is probably going to happen on a limited scale. Most new jobs will probably be created in health and associated professionals (32), in business and associated professionals (33), in metal, machinery, and trade workers (72), in building and related trade workers(71), the employment of which appears to be recovering after a long period of decline, in production and specialized service managers (13) and to a much lesser extent in a small number of other occupations[9]. On the contrary, cleaners and helpers (91), general and keyboard clerks (41), personal service workers (51), teaching professionals (23), agricultural (62), forestry and fishery workers and to a lesser extent other occupations are more likely to be lost.

In addition to the creation and destruction of certain jobs in occupations in the near future, the employment opportunities that are expected to be created in certain occupations are of particular importance. Employment opportunities are the sum of new jobs created in an occupation, in a period of time (expansion demand), with the relevant positions expected to

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[6] A more complete dimension of occupational dynamics would include beyond the number of new jobs and the rate of occupational growth (how fast an occupation is growing), which is beyond the scope of this paper.

[7] CEDEFOP (2020) also presents estimates of employment prospects in the general categories of professions (single-digit code) until 2030.

[8] The Oxford model (Oxford Global Economic Model - GEM) is the most widely used international macroeconomic model. It is structured in a rigorous way to provide consistent predictions and proceed with effective scenario analysis. Its forecasts cover the years up to 2050 and are updated every month. The calculations made in GEM are very transparent and fully justified, and it also makes it particularly easy to change the assumptions for key economic variables resulting in new forecasts of economic scenarios and adding new variables and equations to the model.

[9] Revised data published in Petrakis (2022).

emerge mainly due to retirement or a more general departure from the workforce (replacement demand)[10]. Thus, employment opportunities are expected in a greater number of occupations, compared to that of the creation of new jobs (Chart 3). Opportunities are expected to arise in sales workers (52), teaching professionals (23), drivers and mobile plant operators (83), market oriented skilled agricultural workers (61), health professionals (22) [11], personal service workers (51), general and keyboard clerks (41) and to a lesser extent in other occupations. On the contrary, a limited number of occupations are expected to show, even on a limited scale, negative employment opportunities. A significant decline is expected in persons not classified (0) and in agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (92). Among occupations with a very small decline in their employment opportunities are information and communication technology professionals (25) and technicians (35), occupations that are closely related to the digitization processes of the country's economic activities, in which Greece lags behind but it is expected to intensify.
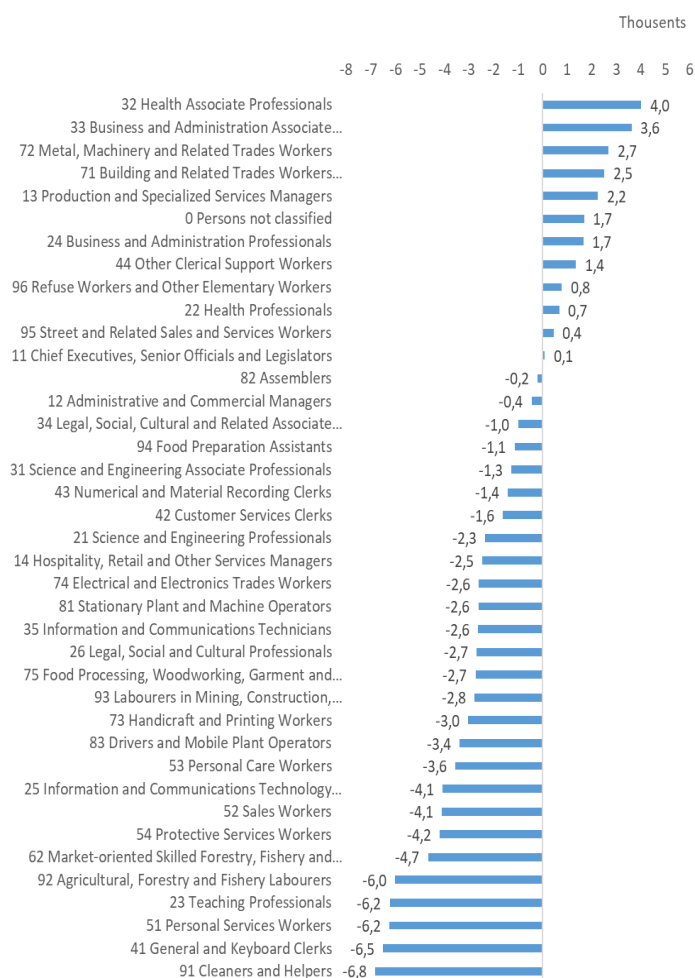
Thousents

	Thousands
32 Health Associate Professionals	4,0
33 Business and Administration Associate…	3,6
72 Metal, Machinery and Related Trades Workers	2,7
71 Building and Related Trades Workers…	2,5
13 Production and Specialized Services Managers	2,2
0 Persons not classified	1,7
24 Business and Administration Professionals	1,7
44 Other Clerical Support Workers	1,4
96 Refuse Workers and Other Elementary Workers	0,8
22 Health Professionals	0,7
95 Street and Related Sales and Services Workers	0,4
11 Chief Executives, Senior Officials and Legislators	0,1
82 Assemblers	-0,2
12 Administrative and Commercial Managers	-0,4
34 Legal, Social, Cultural and Related Associate…	-1,0
94 Food Preparation Assistants	-1,1
31 Science and Engineering Associate Professionals	-1,3
43 Numerical and Material Recording Clerks	-1,4
42 Customer Services Clerks	-1,6
21 Science and Engineering Professionals	-2,3
14 Hospitality, Retail and Other Services Managers	-2,5
74 Electrical and Electronics Trades Workers	-2,6
81 Stationary Plant and Machine Operators	-2,6
35 Information and Communications Technicians	-2,6
26 Legal, Social and Cultural Professionals	-2,7
75 Food Processing, Woodworking, Garment and…	-2,7
93 Labourers in Mining, Construction,…	-2,8
73 Handicraft and Printing Workers	-3,0
83 Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators	-3,4
53 Personal Care Workers	-3,6
25 Information and Communications Technology…	-4,1
52 Sales Workers	-4,1
54 Protective Services Workers	-4,2
62 Market-oriented Skilled Forestry, Fishery and…	-4,7
92 Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Labourers	-6,0
23 Teaching Professionals	-6,2
51 Personal Services Workers	-6,2
41 General and Keyboard Clerks	-6,5
91 Cleaners and Helpers	-6,8

***Chart 2**. Job creation and destruction of occupations12 in the period 2022-2030 Source: Petrakis 2022, edited by us*

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[10]   The demand for replacement is estimated through the number of employees in each occupation over the age of 60, who under certain conditions are expected to retire within the next five years.
[11]   It must be mentioned that replacement demand in health professionals (22) might be lower than the one mentioned here, as many doctors remain in occupation after the age of 65.
[12] For presentation reasons in the chart are not included (61) Market-oriented Skilled Agricultural Workers, who showed a large decline 0f 76.145 persons in this period.

Thousents

| | -20 | -10 | 0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 |

52 Sales Workers — 39,4
23 Teaching Professionals — 25,7
83 Drivers and Mobile Plant Operators — 22,9
61 Market-oriented Skilled Agricultural Workers — 20,4
22 Health Professionals — 20,1
51 Personal Services Workers — 19,9
41 General and Keyboard Clerks — 16,3
71 Building and Related Trades Workers (excluding… — 12,5
91 Cleaners and Helpers — 12,4
72 Metal, Machinery and Related Trades Workers — 8,7
21 Science and Engineering Professionals — 8,7
14 Hospitality, Retail and Other Services Managers — 8,5
26 Legal, Social and Cultural Professionals — 8,2
33 Business and Administration Associate Professionals — 7,4
24 Business and Administration Professionals — 7,2
75 Food Processing, Woodworking, Garment and Other… — 6,3
53 Personal Care Workers — 5,2
74 Electrical and Electronics Trades Workers — 5,2
42 Customer Services Clerks — 3,9
31 Science and Engineering Associate Professionals — 3,5
96 Refuse Workers and Other Elementary Workers — 3,4
13 Production and Specialized Services Managers — 3,3
81 Stationary Plant and Machine Operators — 2,9
93 Labourers in Mining, Construction, Manufacturing and… — 2,8
94 Food Preparation Assistants — 2,4
11 Chief Executives, Senior Officials and Legislators — 2,1
43 Numerical and Material Recording Clerks — 2,1
73 Handicraft and Printing Workers — 1,1
32 Health Associate Professionals — 1,0
34 Legal, Social, Cultural and Related Associate Professionals — 0,9
44 Other Clerical Support Workers — 0,8
12 Administrative and Commercial Managers — 0,8
95 Street and Related Sales and Services Workers — 0,0
82 Assemblers — 0,0
35 Information and Communications Technicians — -0,1
54 Protective Services Workers — -0,3
25 Information and Communications Technology… — -0,3
62 Market-oriented Skilled Forestry, Fishery and Hunting… — -0,5
92 Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Labourers — -3,1
0 Perspms not classified — -3,1

Graph 3. *Employment opportunities in occupation in the period 2022-2030*
Source: Petrakis 2022, ELSTAT , Labor Force Surveys, edited by us

Finally, occupations that show more employment opportunities include service occupations as well as technical occupations that include a wide range of tasks and skills, requiring various interventions to cover modern needs. This in itself poses significant challenges to institutions and mechanisms of Lifelong learning.

5. The Role of Lifelong Learning

The role of Lifelong learning in this turbulent environment is very significant. The new call for re-skilling and upskilling, especially in the case of Greece, needs to be taken into consideration to ensure that another opportunity for growth and development will not be missed. To the extent that some occupations will cease to exist, and others will thrive, a consistent, stable, and long-term policy and strategy are required. Within this perspective training Adult Trainers from various fields to be able to deliver direct training to occupations and other workers that will assist them to achieve re-skilling and/or up-skilling, is a necessity. In addition, given the fact that this prospective study seems to confirm that a significant number of the population, especially those from socially vulnerable groups, will continue to remain out of the job market, lifelong learning and adult education programs remain a necessity. However, the prospects for lifelong learning and adult education in Greece are not very promising so far. According to Eurydice (2023), Greece does not have a long-standing tradition of non-formal training. It mainly focuses on general education for adults, aiming at self-growth, active citizenship, and the development of soft skills and abilities. Second Chance Schools, 66 in total in Greece plus 12 Second Chance Schools in correctional institutions, that play a significant role in recruiting as students, members from socially vulnerable groups, have seen a decline in their enrolled learners in year 2022, almost by 1.000 students (5.352 in 2021 to 4.634 in 2022) (Eurydice, 2023).

However, other opportunities are also present in a) the 50 Vocational Apprenticeship Schools/EPAS of DYPA where currently 7.645 trainees are enrolled, including the six experimental EPAS/DYPA on tourism, b) the Day Vocational Upper Secondary Schools (EPAL) where amongst the students 11.603 adults were attending c) the Evening Vocational Upper Secondary Schools were 23.853 adults attended and the d) the Special Needs-Vocational Lower-Upper Secondary education schools where amongst other students, 1.795 adults attended.

In post-secondary vocational training, the post-secondary apprenticeship programme financed by national and European resources reached approximately 2.800 trainees. To assist transition in the labor market, a vocational training voucher was introduced that allows trainees to receive both theoretical training and a six-month internship in the private sector but not enough data about the success of the program are still available. In addition, the success of the program that regards the provision of learning in Public Lifelong Learning Centers established in 2020, is still not available given that the implementation period is not yet long enough to extract safe results. Accordingly, 186 municipalities offered 614 programs for socially vulnerable groups in a time frame of four years, on quality of life, new technologies, language and communication, social skills, and culture and arts. The programs continue but there is yet no clear evidence regarding their success and trainees' satisfaction.

Regarding higher education, the Hellenic Open University, from the beginning of its operation was called as "second chance university" to address the needs of the older population. In the academic year 2021-2022 out of the 44.208 students, 6.535 are over the age of 50, that is 14.7% of the total students' population.

Therefore, in Lifelong learning and adult education programs, according to Eurydice (2023), the population that receives non-formal training (excluding the Hellenic Open University training voucher and the Public Lifelong Learning Centers in Municipalities), is less than 55.000 (Table 1):

Table 1. Attendees in Lifelong Long Learning and Adult Education Programs

Institution	Adult Trainees
Second Chance Schools	4.634
EPAS/DYPA	7.645
EPAL/DYPA	11.603
Evening VUSS	23.853
Special Needs VLUSS	1.795
Post-Secondary VTAppr.	2.800
Total	**52.330**

According to the Adult Education Survey in Greece (ELSTAT, 2023) the participation rate in non-formal education reached 14.73% in year 2022. However, a closer look at the statistics reveals that participation in non-formal education mainly concerns women, employed up to 34 years old whom have already completed tertiary education.

The lowest rate (2.3%) is again amongst the unemployed over 55 years old. Participation seems to be larger in non-formal educational systems from 9.6% to 14.7% (ELSTAT, 2023) when comparing year 2011 with 2022 but when focusing to those outside the labor force, there is in fact a stagnation or decrease in participation. This finding may indicate the hardships in reaching socially vulnerable populations through training in Greece.
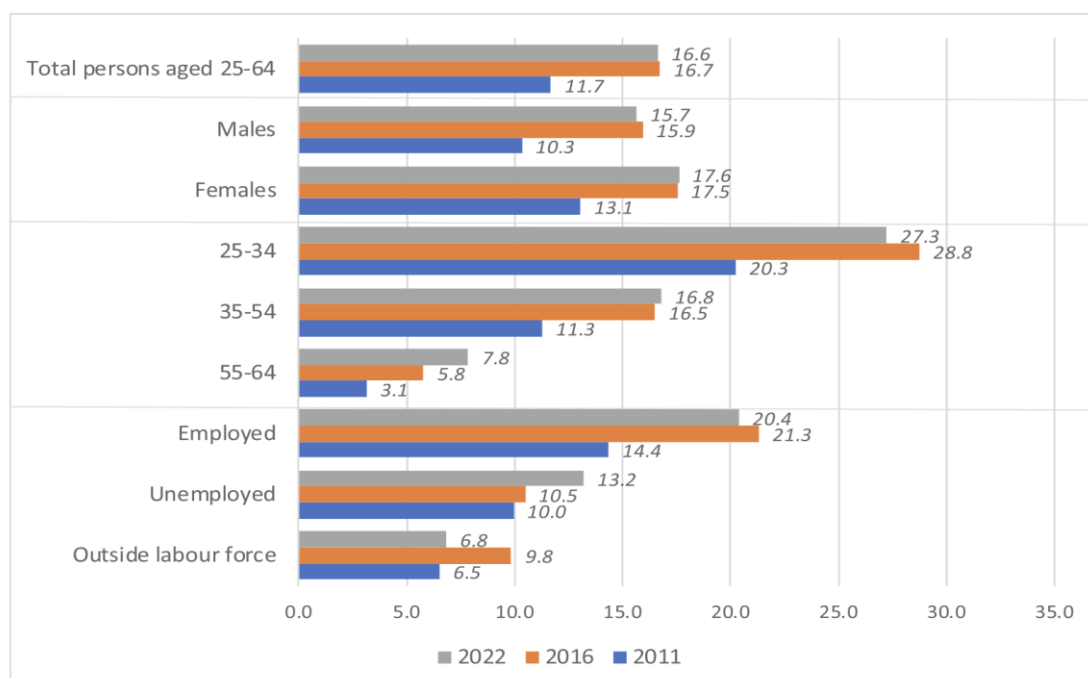
Graph 4: *Participation rates in educational activities 2011, 2016, 2022*

Source: ELSTAT, 2023.

Furthermore, those who attend non-formal training programs for job-related purposes, are mainly those with higher educational attainment and younger in age (up to 34 years old). It is worth noting however that those with lower educational levels seem to choose programs related to arts (19.6%) whilst those with higher educational levels, tend to choose programs more related to computer use (23.3%), finance and management (22.8%) (ELSTAT, 2023).
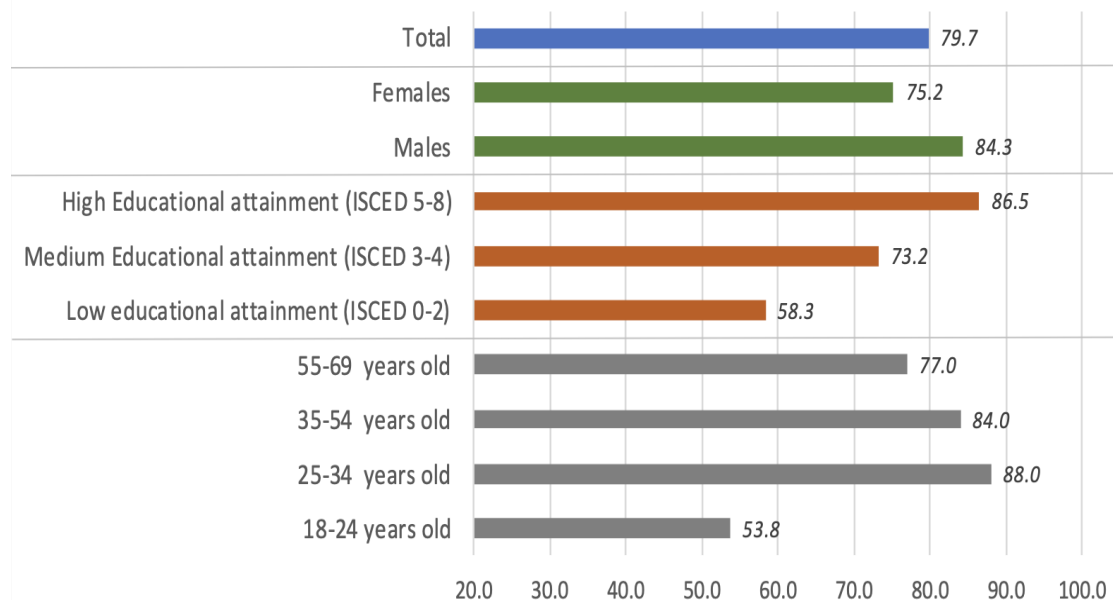
Craph 5: *Job-related non-formal educational activities*

Source: ELSTAT, 2023

6. Discussion

Employment and occupational prospects and Lifelong learning are interlinked and often considered a favored topic for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and politicians. As occupations, dynamic, stagnant, or declining, include certain tasks and skills, their evolution (and mainly in the dynamic ones) provides the necessary information areas in which the long-term strategy of Lifelong Learning should target. However, there seems to be a distance between policy, strategy, and action. Even though the number of people who participate in Lifelong learning in Greece seems to increase, a more careful data observation reveals that those who take advantage of the available opportunities continue to be those with higher skills and educational attainment levels. In addition, even though re-skilling and up-skilling seem to be required as the job market in Greece changes its structure without necessarily producing new jobs, much work needs to be done in bringing together educational institutions, universities, employers, and policymakers to achieve positive results. Even though employers (SEV, GSEVEE), Labour unions (GSEE), public universities, and municipalities through their Lifelong Learning Centers continue to invest in upskilling and reskilling, there is still work to be done especially for the unemployed. The Greek Public Employment Services (DYPA) in this direction implements an upskilling program for large numbers of unemployed people mainly in green and digital skills but as the programme is still in progress the results are not yet available.

Thus, structural inequalities still exist and hinder access to learning for those with lower educational attainment, older age, and higher unemployment, creating a further need for social justice. More surveys and in-depth research are needed in Greece to form a concise map of the adults attending non-formal educational systems and of those who do not attend,

considering that these are the main dropouts of formal education. Relevant studies in this area are few and concern mainly Second Chance Schools (Kiprianos & Mpourgos, 2022). The reasons for non-attendance are significant and have already been pointed out by relevant research (Karalis, 2017). The non-attendance reasons need to be taken into considerable consideration in future planning educational activities, strategies, and policies for a more inclusive Lifelong Learning and Adult Education that will assist job and social integration.

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What was ultimately J. Mezirow's perception of the role of emotions in Transformation Theory?

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Abstract

This article attempts to contribute -with bibliographic data- to the constructive dialogue that continues to evolve around the emotional dimension of learning, within the framework of Transformation Theory (TT). It presents the findings of a literature review - as part of a doctoral thesis - regarding the significance that Mezirow himself attaches to the role of emotion in a transformative process. The research was conducted using the content analysis technique of primary sources, namely the texts of J. Mezirow. The research findings indicated that Mezirow linked emotion to the key elements of his framework: the object of transformation, the means, the phases of the process, the taking of action, and the role of the adult educator. These constitute the "strong" points of the emotional dimension of his theory. On the other hand, points were identified that Mezirow chose to touch upon only superficially or not to analyze further, such as a more detailed examination of the relationship between the emotion of critical reflection in each phase of the process, the recognition and utilization of positive emotions, and proposals for specific techniques for the emergence and management of emotions in practice. Ultimately, the research highlighted that Mezirow, despite any omissions, managed to synthesize a comprehensive theory with a relative balance of rational and emotional elements. In his effort to keep the boundaries of adult education distinct from psychotherapy, he didn't go any deeper into issues in which he had not delved, leaving them open to more specialized theorists in the field.

Keywords: transformative process, rationality, emotions

1. Introduction

The Transformation Theory by J. Mezirow currently gathers the most attention today in the international field of Adult Education (Hoggan, 2016; Kokkos, 2022; Nicolaides & Eschenbacher, 2022; Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Raikou & Karalis, 2016). Furthermore, the robust dialogue surrounding it, demonstrates that it is an open and evolving theory (Mezirow, 2000a; Fleming, 2022). In this context, several texts by Mezirow have been critically discussed. Many theorists mention that one of the central points of criticism has been the excessive emphasis on the rational element at the expense of emotion (Cranton & Taylor, 2013; Kokkos, 2022; Nicolaides & Eschenbacher, 2022). Based on this viewpoint, significant scholars of transformative learning have attempted to construct a new perspective, in which the emotional and inner world of learners play a significant role. However, some of the approaches that were developed, introduced elements that are often discordant and foreign to the foundation laid by the originator of TT (Cranton & Kacukaydin, 2012; Kokkos, 2022; Mälkki, et al., 2017; Newman, 2012; Taylor & Snyder, 2011). Cranton and Taylor (2012) share

the same view, emphasizing that the low awareness of the components of TT leads to the development of practices incompatible with this specific theoretical orientation.

For these reasons, an in-depth exploration of Mezirow's perception, based on what he explicitly and implicitly states, as well as what he omits, regarding the role of emotion in TT - which is neglected from the literature- was considered purposeful. Subsequently, this article aims to fill this gap, contributing in this way to what was also the goal of the thinker himself (Mezirow, 2000b), the search for a common ground. This occurs when one takes into deep consideration the perspective of another, critically examines it, expands it, transforms it, and thus organically incorporates it into their approach, that is what Mezirow calls reflective dialogue. The article has the following structure: first, the methodology chosen is presented to clarify the reasons for the validity of the findings. Next, the research findings are presented regarding the research question: "What significance does the concept of emotion have in J. Mezirow's TT, and how it evolves?" The article concludes with final thoughts and discussion.

2. Method

The research presented is bibliographic research (Karakou, 2023), which was conducted using the technique of content analysis. In this context, 26 texts of the American thinker were examined, i.e. 85% of his total work, to achieve the investigation, understanding, presentation, and documentation of the long-term evolution of his thinking about the importance of emotions in TT. These texts were analyzed semantically focusing on concepts and meanings that contained emotions (Glesne, 2015). Regarding the way of measuring the semantic elements, it was chosen to do a combination of qualitative and quantitative types of analysis, to emphasize not only the presence or absence of an opinion but also its intensity and frequency of occurrence (Vamvoukas, 2010). In particular, our interest focused both on the frequency of occurrence of the sections that were considered revealing clues to Mezirow's understanding of emotion, as well as the weight he attributed to it, and the degree to which he delved into the issue.

Subsequently, based on the themes that emerged from the preliminary study of the material, the categories of analysis were selected. In this review, an attempt was made for the choice of categories to cover both the criterion of non-ambiguity since Mezirow's opinion on emotion was not stable throughout his entire work, and the criterion of significance. To ensure the second criterion, the degree of correlation between emotion and the key structural elements of TT was examined, which, according to important scholars of Mezirow (Baumgartner, 2012; Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Kokkos, 2022; Fleming et al., 2022), as well as the theorist himself (Mezirow, 2007), includes the object of transformation, the means of transformation, the phases of the transformative process, the assumption of action, and the role of the adult educator. According to the above, five categories of analysis were chosen:

1. Correlation of emotions with the object of transformation
2. Correlation of emotions with the means of transformation, i.e., critical reflection and reflective discourse
3. Correlation of emotions with the phases of transformation
4. Correlation of emotions with the assumption of action
5. Correlation of emotions with the role of the adult educator, concerning the exploration of emotions and the techniques that can be applied to utilize them in educational practice

For the findings related to the above categories, the process of analytical data processing (Have, 2007) was followed, going beyond the explicit level of data to an "interpretive" level, asking the following questions:

- What does Mezirow mention or not mention regarding emotions?

- How many sections in each text relate to this topic, and what period do they cover?

- How much importance does he attribute to it (with which issues does he connect it, how clear is the connection he makes)?

- How deeply has he delved into the topic (how much does he delve, what influences has he had, what sources does he utilize)?

We believe that the chosen methodology and the aforementioned criteria contribute to clearly depicting Mezirow's perception of the role of emotion.

3. Findings

Next, the findings of the research regarding the correlation of emotion with the basic elements of TT are presented.

3.1 Correlation of Emotions with the Object of Transformation

From his early texts, the philosopher had already settled on the idea that the object of transformation is linked to psychological factors on multiple levels. On one level, he acknowledged that emotions are inherent in the very nature of the assumptions that make up cognitive structures, such as mental habits and perspectives (Indicatively Mezirow, 1978a, 1991a). On a second level, he identified certain deep psychological factors that set priorities, determine relevance, and focus attention while ultimately distorting cognitive structures. We are referring to childhood traumas (Mezirow, 1990a; 1991a) and defense mechanisms (Mezirow, 1981, 1990a, 1991a). Mezirow, drawing from Gould for childhood traumas and from Goleman for defense mechanisms, provided substantial explanations for how these two processes correlate with negative and threatening emotions, how they can lead to self-deception and fixation, and ultimately how they can function as obstructive barriers to transformation. Finally, on a third level, he emphasized the significance of the influence of the sociocultural framework in shaping cognitive structures through the appropriation of symbolic patterns. These patterns encompass the questioning of an individual's most significant and emotionally charged relationships in life (Mezirow, 1990a, 1991a).

From the above, it becomes evident that the philosopher attributed great importance to emotions related to the object of transformation. He revisited this theme several times, especially during the early stages of his journey, until 1991 when he published his seminal work. His perception was that the exploration and management of emotions should precede transformative learning chronologically to activate it. However, he mainly confined himself to observations and did not delve into a deeper exploration of the subject, explaining, for example, how the acceptance and/or management of negative emotions that distort reality can be achieved, what methods can be used to address fixation and self-deception, or how an individual can cope with the internal struggle and be aided in the process of inner exploration aimed at understanding the difference between emotions rooted in childhood traumas and those related to the daily pressures of life.

3.2 Correlation of Emotions with the Means of Transformation

Regarding the two pillars of Transformative Learning, critical reflection, and reflective dialogue, the research revealed that Mezirow's thinking has undergone overtime shifts that link these two processes with emotions. About critical reflection, there is an evolution in his thinking. Until 2000, his perception was that it was intricately linked with emotions bidirectionally. On one hand, critical reflection generates a threatening and intensely emotional state (Indicatively Mezirow, 1978b, 1981, 1998a). On the other hand, emerging emotions require critical reflection for the recognition of specific beliefs, perspectives, meanings, ideas, or even habits that accompany the way of observation, thought, or action.

(Mezirow, 1981, 1990a, 1995, 1998a). All these ideas resurface and enrich the concept of critical reflection in his work in the 2000s, especially in the chapter he contributed to the collective volume "Learning as Transformation". Furthermore, Mezirow adopted new elements, such as the concept of emotional intelligence, which led to a broader perspective on critical reflection. In this context, Mezirow (2000a) argues that the threatening emotional experiences that accompany critical reflection upon cherished beliefs (a leap into the unknown, as he characterizes this process to emphasize the intensity of the threat) can only be managed if the qualitative characteristics of emotional intelligence have developed. These characteristics include the ability to recognize, manage, or redirect emotions, the ability to control pressure for adaptation to changing situations, and the development of feelings of courage. Therefore, we understand that, from 2000 onwards, he started to see emotion as an integral part of the reflective process, considering emotional intelligence as a prerequisite.

Regarding reflective discourse, it was found that until 2000, the references mainly focused on the rational dimension of the concept. There are only a few exceptions, such as the reference to therapeutic dialogue, the object of which is the recognition and management of emotions (Mezirow, 1991a), as well as some brief mentions of the role of relationships (Mezirow, 1989b) and empathy (Mezirow, 1996, 1997, 1998b). Between 2000 and 2003, after about twenty years of creative ferment, Mezirow makes a turning point and presents a more enriched perspective on reflective discourse. He primarily draws elements from Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence (Mezirow, 2003, 2000a). Based on this, he highlighted emotional maturity as a prerequisite for participation in reflective discourse, recognizing the need for the development of two important emotional skills: self-regulation and empathy.

All of the above are significant steps toward mitigating the rational character of the means of transformation. However, a deeper exploration of the interactive relationship between emotions, critical reflection, and reflective discourse is missing.

3.3 Correlation of Emotions with the Phases of the Transformative Process

Regarding the phases of the transformative process, the content analysis findings reflect that Mezirow primarily focused on the emotional constraints in the early phases, the disorienting dilemma, and the self-examination phase.

Mezirow's perception of the disorienting dilemma over time is that it is accompanied by intense and threatening emotions, as it is usually linked with either a dramatic event or a sense of disharmony (Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b, 1981, 1985, 1990a, 1991a). Especially in the first case, Mezirow (1978a, 1978b) recognized that the dilemma caused externally is typically less negotiable, more intense, and emotionally charged. Consequently, it is more likely to lead to a perspective transformation. He even believes that the emotional pressure accompanying the disorienting dilemma is crucial for the entire process's outcome (Mezirow, 1978a).

Therefore, Mezirow, on the one hand, recognizes the emotional nature of the disorienting dilemma and, on the other hand, considers it necessary for transformation. For this reason, he deemed the self-examination phase as essential, given that in this phase following the realization of loss, the individual ceases to be the same and is called upon to experience an intense and emotionally charged phase of life. To support the role of emotions in this phase with research data, he drew on elements from his research and related research from the field of Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning (Morgan, 1987; Williams, 1986; Hunter, 1980, in Mezirow, 1991a), which he observed converged in highlighting the intense emotional intensity in the early stages, described as shock and disorientation, pain, and rejection. Furthermore, he identified common behaviors in the above research, mainly in terms of a kind of immobilization resulting from the failure to manage negative emotions in the second phase, which obstructs learners from committing to and progressing in the transformative process because it appears particularly demanding and threatening to them. Subsequently, he

recognized that special emotional strength is required for learners to overcome their fears and advance in the transformative process (Mezirow, 1991a).

So, for the first two phases, a strong connection with emotions is identified, perceived as "intruders" that disrupt the learning processes. We, therefore, arrive at a similar point to what we saw in the section on critical reflection: Mezirow mainly referred to negative emotions and considered their processing as a prerequisite for transitioning to the remaining phases of the transformative process. What is missing is the reference to possible positive emotions. On the other hand, even in the case of limiting ourselves to negative emotions, we lack a more nuanced approach to interpreting and analyze emotional processes and how they function in-depth, and especially to provide specific suggestions for management and, why not, their utilization for the benefit of transformation.

3.4 Emotion Correlation with Taking Action

For Mezirow, taking action is closely linked to Transformative Learning. This idea serves as a constant reference point for the scholar (Indicatively Mezirow, 1978a, 1991, 1994a, 2000a). He believed that taking action largely depends on what an individual's emotional state dictates. He realized that to guide a person to the final stage of transformation, one needs to activate not only their cognitive abilities but also their emotional energy to overcome the negative emotions that tend to hinder progress (Mezirow, 1991a, 1998a). In the end, he concluded that emotional maturity is a prerequisite for taking action. The characteristics of emotional intelligence, such as recognizing and managing emotions, creating self-motivation, understanding the emotions of others, self-regulation, and self-control, are deemed essential conditions for transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000a).

To sum up, Mezirow recognized that the ultimate goal of transformation, taking action based on new, revised perspectives, depends largely on the successful management of negative emotions that tend to hinder progress. On the one hand, we see that the scholar adequately developed this issue, perhaps because it is a familiar topic in the field of adult education. On the other hand, we see a repetition of the same reasoning: only negative emotions are acknowledged, and positive ones are completely omitted.

3.5 The Role of the Adult Educator in Emotion Management in Transformative Learning

Mezirow repeatedly refers to the role of the adult educator in his writings (Indicatively Mezirow, 1978a, 1990b, 1991a, 1995, 2000a, 2009), attributing to this role multiple dimensions. About the explored topic, Mezirow often refers to the educator-facilitator of relationship development and other times to the educator–counselor–encourager, which is in our opinion, two dimensions interconnected and difficult to distinct. The first dimension is indirectly related to emotions, as Mezirow consistently considered the role of supportive relationships significant in developing self-confidence, empathy, and emotional understanding of learners (ostensive see Mezirow, 1981, 1990b, 2000a). The second dimension is explicitly linked to emotions and encompasses several different levels. Firstly, it involves helping learners understand the reasons for their distorted assumptions and fostering critical reflection (Mezirow, 1978b, 1990a, 2006, 2009). It also relates to supporting learners in participating smoothly in reflective dialogue (Mezirow, 1981, 1991a, 2000, 2009). Furthermore, it involves empowering learners to take action (Mezirow, 1985, 1994a, 1995). Lastly, it concerns empowering learners to understand the emotional state they are in (Mezirow, 1981, 1995, 2000).

Based on the above, we understand that Mezirow sees the adult educator as the person who will strengthen learners on multiple levels. Especially regarding emotions, the scholar believed that adult educators can help primarily healthy learners feel that the educational process meets their personal needs and preferences, develop self-confidence, feel secure in building

trust relationships, express themselves emotionally freely, and receive counseling support for life transition issues. On the other hand, Mezirow was firm that the role of adult educators should not cross into the domain of psychotherapy as long as it concerns handling the emotions (perhaps one of the rare instances where Mezirow appears absolute on an issue). He, having delved into Gould's work, considered it an ethical issue for educators to intervene in emotions that emerge from psychological trauma, without the appropriate scientific background (Mezirow, 1991a).

4. Discussion

Through the content analysis of Mezirow's texts, an attempt was made to outline the philosopher's perception of the role of emotion in the key elements of Transformative Theory. Initially, it was an effort to capture this perception based on different periods. However, it was observed that this approach was not feasible for all categories as Mezirow focused on and analyzed each issue in different temporal moments, and his reasoning did not follow a linear path. We saw that in the early years of his creative journey, he was preoccupied with the connection of emotion with the subject of transformation, the phases of the transformative process, taking action, and the role of the educator in emotion management. Some of these issues, such as the psychological dimension of meaning structures and the interruption of taking action due to emotional barriers, were so settled in his perception that they consistently appeared in his latest writings. We consider this to have happened because the philosopher had established a solid foundation to support his positions, drawing elements from both neurobiology and fundamental psychological approaches such as cognitive and psychoanalytic theories. As it was also observed, there were two primary influences on him regarding these issues, Gould and Goleman.

On the other hand, the interconnection of emotion with the two main pillars of his theory, critical reflection, and reflective discourse, was established much later, around the year 2000. At that point, a significant shift in Mezirow's approach occurred, aimed at mitigating the rational character of his transformative tools. This change could be explained by two factors. The first factor might be the substantial criticism he faced regarding the emphasis on the rational nature of his transformative means. The second factor is that the volume from the year 2000 encompasses all the reflections developed for various issues - including emotion - in the First American Conference on Transformative Learning (1998), in which Mezirow opened the dialogue and allowed other theorists in the field to present their ideas. Mezirow knew and was unafraid to confront different viewpoints, and, as always open to dialogue, he acknowledged the areas he had not sufficiently developed in his theory. We could argue that these two factors played the role of disorienting dilemma, in his shift away from his orientation towards rationality. Therefore, the philosopher himself, while revisiting his theory, engaged in a transformative process regarding the role of emotion.

The elements we identified as having transformed to some extent in his thinking were his commitment to the concept of rationality as the exclusive factor in transforming dysfunctional assumptions and the gradual adoption of the viewpoint that non-rational factors, such as emotion, can play a significant role in the transformation of perspective. On the contrary, elements that were shaped very early on remained stable and/or were consistently reinforced. These elements included the recognition of emotional barriers related to the psychological dimension of cognitive structures, the development of defense mechanisms, childhood traumas, symbolic patterns, emotionally charged obstructive dilemmas, taking action due to emotional barriers, and the recognition of the need to manage intense negative emotions in the second phase of transformation.

We could argue that all of the above are the "strong points" of the philosopher concerning the recognition of emotions in TT. The goals set by Mezirow, such as self-awareness, self-

integration, self-directed thinking, and ultimately the fundamental change in the way we perceive ourselves and the world around us, require deeper processes. The American philosopher acknowledges this. His work is permeated with the belief that learning is a process full of emotions: they are hidden in the cognitive habits that have become ingrained in our perception, they may stem from symbols and traumas internalized during childhood, and they emerge insistently when we feel threatened, hindering progress and action. Mezirow satisfactorily explained all of the above, highlighting points of convergence between TT and the theories of Goleman and Gould. Therefore, the philosopher's contribution lies mainly in the recognition of emotional barriers, without the management of which it is difficult to engage in a transformative process. His contribution lies also in the fact that despite the pressures he faced, he made sure to maintain clear boundaries between psychotherapists and adult educator so that the boundaries of educators would be clear. This serves as a protective barrier for both educators and learners, as uncontrolled emotional invocation could leave them vulnerable and unprotected. Similar positions have also been expressed by other philosophers, such as Gould (1988), Illeris (2014), and Kegan (2000).

On the contrary, points that we believe require a more detailed analysis and are therefore weaker are greater integration of emotional elements in the process of critical reflection and, above all, the recognition and utilization of positive emotions for the benefit of the transformative process. Additionally, it would have been useful if the philosopher had provided specific suggestions for the practical expression and management of emotions in all phases of the transformative process, such as the use of art or group dynamics. Mezirow had the appropriate influences. Regarding the issue of art, he knew and he could draw from Greene's work (Greene, 2000). He should also have had a solid foundation for group dynamics, as an adult educator. On the other hand, the fact that he did not do so, means that he had not delved deeply into these issues. Subsequently, this fact strengthens his theory more than it weakens it, from the perspective that the philosopher had the ethics and integrity to analyze only the issues he had thoroughly explored. For this reason, he referred issues that did not fall within his field to other, more specialized theorists, with the expectation that they would attempt to bridge their perspectives to seek a more comprehensive theory for change, but in the context that this is motivated by a unifying disposition rather than a disposition to promote individual ideas (Aalsburg & Mezirow, 2000).

Furthermore, we would add that any addition or extension of TT should be made with a high level of awareness and a deep understanding of what the American philosopher has stated regarding the components of his theory. This requires a sobriety, a deep analysis and a long-term monitoring of his work, instead of piecemeal references, in order to lead to justified criticism instead of dichotomies. This is essential to develop practices that are compatible with this particular theoretical orientation.

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Refining Adult Learners' Discursive Capacities:

A Response to the Current Epistemological Crisis through the Lens of Transformation Theory

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Abstract

The following article begins with the observation that both public discourses, as well as dialogue between adult learners within certain educational contexts, is frequently confined to competitive and strongly assertive claims, a characteristic which significantly diminishes the epistemological potential of the dialogical act. Drawing on the description of the current 'epistemological crisis' by Hoggan and Hoggan – Kloubert (2021), the article first attempts to show how this crisis is reflected in the understanding of the dialogical act among particular groups of adult learners. The article then tries to explore ways through which this understanding can be enriched and transformed into a more complex and multidimensional process. The central orientation of such a transition, is elaborated through the lens of Jack Mezirow's Transformation Theory (1991, 2000), thus growing out of an examination, as well as an effort to transform, the epistemological 'habits of mind' which characterize the learners' distorted perception of the dialogical act. The discussion of the learners' epistemological habits of mind, is followed by the attempt to set up a framework of discursive activities, which help learners actualize the above transformation, specifically to the way they articulate questions of value (that is, their value priorities and value assumptions). The suggested activities are geared towards cultivating the learners' awareness of evaluative and conceptual 'complexity', with the ultimate aim of allowing this awareness to strengthen their epistemic and discursive agency. The gradual cultivation of this agency is demonstrated through a range of practical examples, which are analysed in terms of their transformative, philosophical, and ethical dimensions. The learners' renewed understanding of the dialogical act, is finally related to their capacity to activate their 'reflective judgment' (see also Kant, 1790 / 1987 in Hoggan and Hoggan – Kloubert, 2021).

Keywords: epistemological crisis, dialogue and adult education, Transformation Theory, complexity, reflective judgment

1. Introduction

The widespread lack of consensus about what constitutes valid knowledge, as well as about the ways that are considered appropriate to acquire such knowledge, has been highlighted by Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert (2021) as the dominant epistemological 'crisis' of our times. As the writers note, there is a significant segment of citizens who discuss key issues of global importance, based only on *what* or *who* they believe, while disregarding the crucial aspect of examining and evaluating the methods and processes through which they end up having these beliefs (2021, p. 9). This particular imbalance becomes more apparent in two striking examples**:** the emergence of the anti-vaccine movement, as well as the binary, 'dualistic' view regarding climate change (2021, p. 9-10). It is characteristic that, about the latter, a choice to either 'believe or not believe' in human-induced global climate change, seems to be based – according to the writers – 'on one's political or religious identity', or because one '*believes* in science' (2021, p.10).

What is impressive here is that discussions around the validity of a certain factual claim (i.e what is factually true about climate change) appear to be heavily obstructed by the influence of specific normative and evaluative orientations (i.e. one 'should adhere to science', or one 'should prioritize the sayings of religion'). Surely, the relationship between the factual and the evaluative, plays a significant role in the emergence of the crisis designated above, however in this paper I would like to focus mostly on the evaluative dimension of this crisis, given that discussions around value, are themselves frequently characterized by a 'dualistic' and polemical form of competing statements, that is, statements that preclude any deeper conversations about how normative convictions are formed. As an adult educator, I have often observed that some learners tend to underestimate, or fail to realize, the importance of collaborative dialogue, as a highly useful means for shaping a mutually agreed upon acknowledgment of the value conflicts and value priorities, which are at stake in any given discussion about social policy or decision-making.

In what follows, I will attempt to substantiate the above observation, by presenting my experience with a range of adult learners within a particular educational context. Drawing on this experience, I will attempt to demonstrate my effort to analyse and transform the learners' distorted understanding of the dialogical act, by utilizing specific practices and concepts from the field of Adult Education. The methodological axis of this effort will be based on Jack's Mezirow's Transformation Theory (1991, 2000), which constitutes the most comprehensive theoretical attempt to systematize aspects of the field. At the same time, I will also draw on insights from the field of psychology (Kitchener in Mezirow 1991, Rogers in Rogers & Farson 1957, 2015, and Kegan in Mezirow 2000), as well as philosophy (Rachels, 2003, Kant, 1970 /1987 in Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert, 2021), to illuminate the logic of certain analytical and practical aspects of the project.

2. Presentation and Analysis of the Problem

For the past three years, I have been teaching a module on 'Critical Thinking', in the General Education Program, at a private college in Athens. The course is obligatory for all students – who are mostly aged between 18 and 24 – and a significant part of our work consists of discussions revolving around issues of moral and socio-political interest. These discussions usually require an in-depth examination of the value assumptions of the participants (see examples below), however, this examination is seriously hampered, because students frequently just end up having debates, taking "for" or "against" sides, about a given issue under consideration. This binary, polarised form of dialogue seems to reproduce in the classroom, the restrictive understanding of public discourse designated above, since opposing statements of evaluative preferences appear to take precedence over any alternative understanding of the dialogical act.

Taking into consideration the students' particular stance towards the dialogical act, I tried to analyze their attitude by referring to the concepts of Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. More specifically, I tried to make use of the analytical distinction between (dysfunctional) 'points of view' and 'habits of mind', which this theory introduces (Mezirow, 2000, 2007, pp. 43-71), to make sense of the problem. According to Mezirow, there would be a possibility to transform both the students' wider mental predispositions (their 'habits of mind'), as well as the individual expressions[13] of these predispositions (the students' 'points of view'), as long as these were identified, critically reassessed and reframed, through alternative modes of action and understanding.

The simplistic understanding of dialogue as a form of debate between two opposing and finalized positions seemed to constitute a dysfunctional point of view that underestimated the *exploratory* and, therefore, *reflective* possibilities offered by a more comprehensive

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[13] Expressions of value, emotion, and behaviour – See Mezirow, 2000, 2007, p. 57.

understanding of the dialogical interaction. This dysfunctional point of view appeared to constitute a particular form of cognitive behavior, which confined the process of exploring knowledge, to an exclusive form of competing viewpoints. This kind of cognitive behavior could be further attributed to an epistemological 'habit of mind', concerning the way knowledge is formed, as well as the way the process of learning is understood: the students failed to realize that a more comprehensive understanding of the dialogical act, could *enrich* the ways through which they could learn how to think about a given issue. And, this epistemological habit of mind, could be also related to another one, of the same kind, which limited the students' understanding of 'learning' to its traditional forms: several students were often absent during the hours scheduled for discussion, reappearing only for my lectures, a fact which indicated that they considered the process of learning to spring mainly from the vertical transmission of knowledge from educator to learner, and not from their own research and inter-subjective interaction.

Both of the above epistemological habits of mind recalled significant aspects of what psychologist K.S. Kitchener refers to as 'epistemic premise distortions' (1983, 1990 and in Mezirow, 1991, pp.123-128), namely, the difficulties learners may have with coming to grips with the process of 'rational inquiry', as a presupposition for cultivating their reflective judgment (1983, 1990). My students, either in the form of assuming that they already possess a correct 'for or against' answer to a particular question, or in the form of referring to an authority (their teacher), as the bearer of a correct answer, seemed to resist and recoil from the complexity of the process of rational inquiry. As I understood it, this resistance could be attributed to the fact that, when it came to the question of what was 'true' about a certain issue under consideration, the students were frequently clinging to their direct subjective understanding, or that of an authority, because of their need to hold on to some kind of cognitive *certainty*. However, for a learner to realize that uncertainty is an integral part of the process of inquiry and that this process is itself fallible (although still useful), constitutes an important epistemological step.[14] To help my students take this step, the challenge which I decided to confront, was to try to familiarize them with elements of uncertainty, which their collaborative inquiry could entail. At the same time, I would have to set up the conditions for a kind of dialogical interaction that would be truly collaborative, to mitigate the students' need to cling to the certainty of their position, a need which usually led to the binary understanding of an issue mentioned above.

In this way, the objective of the activities that follow is two-fold: first, to establish a more cooperative framework for the dialogical act, and, second, to allow this framework to become a catalyst for the students' coming to terms with certain difficulties of the process of rational inquiry.

3. Building a Relevant Framework of Activities

The book recommended by the private college at which I am employed for teaching Critical Thinking is Diestler's *Becoming a Critical Thinker: A User Friendly Manual* (2012), and the 9th chapter of the particular book, which is entitled *"Fair-mindedness"*, includes an active listening exercise, created by psychotherapist Carl Rogers (p. 419 onwards). The participants are divided into pairs, with one member of each pair expressing their opinion about an issue, and the other expressing their own, after first having reformulated *in their own words*, the opinion

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[14] See also Kitchener on the seven stages of development of reflective judgment (1983, 1990). Moreover, see Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco CA: Jossey -Bass, for Mezirow's consideration of Kitchener's approach (pp. 123-128). Although Kitchener does not distinguish between reflection within different domains of learning (i.e. 'instrumental' and 'communicative' learning, in Mezirow 2000), and Mezirow points to this divergence from his own understanding, he considers the issues which Kitchener tackles in her analysis above (namely, questions of public policy), as comparable to the problems that pertain to his conceptualization of the domain of 'communicative' learning.

expressed by the former. Once both members have agreed on how they understand the issue at hand, the discussion between the participants moves forward, through continuous mutual efforts of rephrasing, so that each student's viewpoint, as well as the issue under consideration, becomes clearer to the other. What emerges through this exercise is a meticulous process of 'paraphrasing', to form a common ground of communication. As I explained to the students, each paraphrase could also be expressed in the form of a question.

The exercise took place in cases where opposing views were expressed during a discussion (with the discussion naturally being interrupted and postponed, in order for the exercise to be conducted), or the pairs were asked from the beginning to find a topic on which their views differed and discuss it.

When there were difficulties in conducting this exercise, examples analysed in the book recommended in the curriculum were first read in the classroom, so that the students would get an image or a model of the rhythm and the aims of the exercise.

An example of an issue that was raised and successfully developed, can be presented here indicatively. The issue was based on the students' personal experiences with the high-school subject of ancient Greek, and the question was whether the subject was a "useful" or "useless" academic course. The paraphrasing exercises led to a gradual mitigation of the binary evaluative positions around the issue, through the students' repeated efforts to focus and specify the general statements regarding the usefulness of the particular subject: what exactly do we mean by "useful" and "useless"? Is "useful" knowledge to be understood through a mostly instrumentalist perspective (understood, for instance, as professionally 'exploitable' later in life), or could it also refer to a wider linguistic development, and the cultivation of cultural sensitivity? Moreover, could these two concepts of 'usefulness' be in fact linked to one another, and how?

All of the questions above, formed a collective basis of problematization, on which the students started to build a deeper comprehension of each other's perspectives. Building on such a basis, constitutes a prerequisite for the achievement of *mutual understanding*, a principle which constitutes a key aspect of what Mezirow calls rational 'discourse', in the context of his Transformation Theory (2000, 2007, pp. 50-55). The aim of mutual understanding, also represents a key aspect of Jurgen Habermas' conceptualisation of 'discourse' (1984), a conceptualisation Mezirow draws upon, in order to elaborate his own approach (see also Mezirow 1991). It should be noted that one of the conditions posited by Habermas (1984), as necessary for the achievement of mutual understanding, refers specifically to the condition of the *comprehensibility* of the expressed viewpoints in the context of the dialogical act, and this condition was able to be actualized through the paraphrasing exercises analysed above. The effort for more careful, precise and thorough articulations, emerged as an important presupposition of the effective function of discourse.

By cultivating the intention of comprehensibility, the students were also confronted with one more important epistemic challenge, namely, that of adopting a critical stance towards the certainty of their own views. More specifically, the paraphrasing exercises allowed the students to practice what Mezirow calls 'epoché' (2000, 2007 p. 52), a term which the scholar borrows from the ancient Greek Sceptics, referring to a temporary *suspension of judgment*, effected in the context of discourse, in order to achieve a clearer understanding of the issue at hand. Characteristically, the above interrogation of the different meanings of the concept of 'usefulness', allowed the students to practise 'epoché', by refraining from rushing to a judgment about the issue, and instead enter a process of analyzing and elucidating the ambiguity of the concepts in play. By being confronted with an *interpretive ambiguity*, the students began to realize their own active role in formulating the meaning of a subject under consideration, while becoming more aware of the fact that apparent digressions, pauses, as

well as complications of meaning, can actually play a significant part in the process of dialogical interaction, as well as in the process of learning and understanding.

Once the aforementioned exercise had taken place, the students were called to present the viewpoints of their partners, first to a group of their fellow students, and then before the entire class (snowballing strategy). As I had emphasized at the start of the exercise, the purpose of this effort would be to elucidate and document the various perspectives, and *not* reach conclusions.

4. Further Focusing the Framework of Activities: Thematizing the Understanding of 'Complexity'

As noted above, the broader purpose of the dialogical exercises outlined here would be to mitigate the binary and conclusive treatment of an issue, in favour of familiarizing students with the breadth and depth of the process of reflective inquiry. In line with this purpose, the students were then asked to conduct group projects with the specific aim of mapping out the *complexity* of an issue, in a more systematic way. Separated into groups of 5-6, the students were first asked to apply the process just analysed, to a topic of interest. This time, however, the groups were also provided with particular conceptual tools that could assist them in delineating and framing the process more methodically.

The conceptual tools I provided them with, were drawn from:

a. Mezirow's Theory of Transformation, where the three dimensions of the concept of critical reflection are analysed – that is, the content of a point of view, the criteria and process used for formulating the particular point of view, and, finally, the generalized assumptions, on which a given point of view is based (see premise reflection and habits of mind in Mezirow, 2000, 2007 p. 59).

b. Certain texts in the course's curriculum that connect the content of specific criteria, to the schools of moral and political philosophy that produced them (Rachels, 2003). Indicatively, we discussed criteria drawn from Emmanuel Kant's deontological ethics (judging a practice according to certain principles), Utilitarianism (judging a practice by referring to its consequences and utility), and also Aristotle's philosophy of the virtues (judging a character, rather than an isolated action).

Both the concept of a 'criterion' and that of an 'assumption' proved to serve as productive analytical tools.

About the function of 'assumption', an example that was examined was the idea of the "sanctity" of human life, as the basis for certain opinions expressed against the practices of abortion and euthanasia. It is worth noting here, that in this case, the students referred back to the process of 'epoché' which they had utilized before, trying to determine whether one could trace an interpretive ambiguity in our understanding of what makes life 'sacred': does the idea spring from an unconditional protection of life in its biological sense, or could it also spring from an unconditional respect for the inherent value and dignity of a human being? And, if the latter is the case, could there be a possibility for the idea to be also used in favour of the right to abortion or euthanasia, since an essential aspect of human dignity refers to the right to self-determination?

By interrogating these issues, the students became more critical towards the polemical construal of the pro-life/pro-choice debate around abortion and euthanasia, realizing the need to further clarify and justify the assumptions of each position. Once more, the indeterminacy of a concept ('sanctity'), worked as an incentive which allowed learners to deepen their capacity for reasonable inquiry.

A methodologically similar approach was adopted in relation to the function of 'criterion'. The first example discussed, referred us back to the idea of 'usefulness', examined in relation to an academic subject such as ancient Greek above. The students attempted this time to understand the idea under the light of the philosophical criterion of 'utility', as this has been elaborated by the philosophical school of Utilitarianism, referring to the consequences of a particular practice. Again, the interpretation of 'utility' did not seem to be straightforward to the students: they wondered how can actually 'utility' be measured, given that not everyone agrees on what is best for everyone.

Disagreements around different types of utility were then recorded and attributed to different contexts of consideration. What the students seemed to observe was the necessity to simultaneously open up the discussion around these disagreements *and* try to work through them. I deemed this observation to be crucial, since it showed that the students were starting to integrate both an awareness of uncertainty and a need for intersubjective negotiation, in their understanding of how dialogue works.

This need for intersubjective interrogation was characteristically expressed in relation to another significant issue. Going back to the examination of how an 'assumption' works, the students were at some point confronted with the belief in the idea of 'freedom of expression', in the context of a discussion around the question of whether there are legitimate limits to this idea. The idea of 'freedom of expression' seemed to constitute another 'assumption' in need of further clarification.

Some students maintained the position that the concept of 'freedom' here, should be understood as widely as possible, given that it constitutes an individual right which has to be safeguarded against any arbitrary restrictions – for instance, safeguarding the freedom of press from any interventions by the state authority.

Another portion of students however, maintained the position that this 'freedom' should be understood in a more restricted, and conditional manner, taking into account the consideration that certain limits to this 'freedom' should be deemed legitimate, such as in cases of hate speech, where a person's cultural identity is attacked and denigrated.

Both the more 'liberal', and the more 'moderate' view, expressed above, presented an aspect of argumentative refinement, since they used the conceptual indeterminacy of 'freedom', not simply as an obstacle, but rather as a *springboard*, for a more nuanced elaboration of the problem. This nuanced elaboration of the problem, allowed the students to move away from the absolutism of agreement/disagreement, and move towards a more malleable form of collective reflection, since both views that were expressed, exhibited strong points that could be utilized on different occasions.

5. Extending the Epistemic and Ethical Dimensions of the Process

At this point, I considered it useful to anchor the process of the students' intersubjective interrogation of the issue in the idea of what Mary Field Belenky and Ann V. Stanton call 'connected knowing' (Belenky & Stanton, in Mezirow, 2000, 2007, pp. 107-136). According to Belenky and Stanton, participants in a dialogue are encouraged to highlight the strong points of each expressed view, instead of antagonistically trying to spot the weak points of a differing position. In the case just discussed, the principle of 'connected knowing' could serve as a means to trace the various interpretive and evaluative implications of what 'freedom of expression' might mean, underlining the students' willingness to fine-tune their common ground of understanding.

By working towards this direction, the principle of 'connected knowing' could enhance the student's capacity to demonstrate the complexity of a given issue, a capacity aligned with the initial aim of the discursive exercises adumbrated above. The ability to recognize and analyze

complexity amounts to an effort to articulate value (as well as evaluative assumptions) that is attentive to the possibility of further distinctions, as well as open to the possibility of further scrutiny. It is worth mentioning here that it is under this light that one could return to the vagueness of the expressions of a 'belief in science' or a 'priority of religion', referred to at the beginning of this paper to public discourse, to see how one could further specify, contextualize, and more concretely explain these expressions. For now, however, it seems important to emphasize that cultivating an awareness of complexity, could be conducive to formulating a more inclusive and crucially '*permeable*' frame of reference for the students, a term Mezirow uses (2000, 2007, p. 57), to describe a reliable structure of mental dispositions that characterizes an agent who is capable of understanding, evaluating and integrating, diversified and hitherto unfamiliar perspectives.

The purpose of cultivating the permeability of the students' frame of reference, would not be to establish a relativistic approach to the truth but to undermine competitive dogmatism, by encouraging students to seriously consider the legitimacy of differentiated perspectives. This kind of serious consideration has both an ethical and an epistemological dimension. Apart from actualizing the respect towards the voice and autonomy of any participant in a dialogue (ethical dimension), it simultaneously manages to create a more expansive and flexible framework of thinking, that allows epistemic agents to test and thoughtfully criticize the rigidity of general 'for or against' claims (epistemological dimension).

It is exactly this capacity to *probe the generality* of such claims, which amounts to what Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert describe in their paper (2021, p.12) as the capacity to develop the '*reflective power*' of judgment. According to the writers – who draw their understanding from the philosopher Emmanuel Kant (1790/1987, p. 19) – what characterizes a particular form of judgment as reflective, is the latter's capacity to 'construct new categories and patterns and form higher-order representations', able to accommodate the existence of 'outliers' that do not seem to initially fit into existing categories. Tapping into the conceptual ramifications of 'utility', 'sanctity', or 'freedom of expression' – which were analyzed above – exemplifies a way of constructing these concepts as 'higher-order representations' that can accommodate difference and variability, thus contributing to a more reflective understanding of the initial general concepts.[15]

Interrogating the plasticity of various terms and ideas, may not always come as natural to learners, since it requires the work of pushing against their impulse towards the sense that meaning can be fixed and unproblematic. This particular impulse, is especially relevant to young adults, like my Critical Thinking students, who tend to cling to the certainty of their views, also because of their need to personally express and distinguish themselves. According to psychologist Robert Kegan (in Mezirow, 2000, 2007, pp. 73-105), this tendency could have been a lingering consequence of adolescence, that is, a time during which individuals develop a characteristically egocentric psychological habit of mind.[16] Nevertheless, as Hoggan and Hoggan–Kloubert show in their paper (2021, p.13), the impulse described above, seems to also constitute a larger phenomenon, observed in the context of public discourse more generally. 'What people cannot endure is the attempt to evade the either /or', write Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944 / 2002, p. 198). Hoggan and Hoggan-Kloubert poignantly refer to this quote from the philosophers, to underline the

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[15] One can observe here the specific signification of the concept of 'reflective judgement' according to Kant. Psychologist Kitchener's understanding of the concept, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, seems to refer more broadly to an agent's rational capacity to account for, test and assess the validity of various perspectives (see also in Mezirow, 1991, pp. 123-128). However, both seem to capture the aspect of *testing* and *probing* particular assumptions. For the relation between Kitchener's 'reflective judgement' and philosopher John Dewey's 'reflective thinking', see Mezirow, 1991, as above.

[16] Psychologist Kitchener also refers to age (as well as education), as factors influencing learners' tendency to move towards or away from the psychological need for certainty (see in Mezirow, 1991, as above).

discomfort brought about by the effort to deviate from the imperative of definitive binary claims. However, it is precisely this discomfort that brings us back to another ethical, or rather existential aspect of this effort, an aspect which goes beyond the respect of our interlocutors, and towards the relationship with ourselves: by undermining our psychological need for certainty, being reflective, requires courage. And it requires courage, as well as deliberation, in the face of the realization that neither the truth nor the meaning of a topic under consideration, is pre-given and immediately available. Realizing this fact and acting upon this realization, may bring about a sense of risk and precariousness, which nevertheless constitute inevitable and essential components of our remaining receptive and willingly committed to the process of dialogical learning. As Mezirow notes, the elaboration of reflective judgment is probationary and tentative (2000, 2007, pp. 51-52),[17] and if we are not willing to test our way of thinking and experience, we will not be able to access the emancipatory potential rational discourse.

6. Conclusion

What I have attempted to demonstrate through the discussion in this paper, are certain strategies an adult educator can utilize, to render learners more sensitive and alert to elements of uncertainty implicated in the process of collective rational inquiry. More specifically, I have attempted to show ways that allowed my students to activate their ability to handle more intricate and multidimensional discursive processes, thus beginning to transform the restrictive stance towards the dialogical act, that they had manifested at the beginning. The gradual transformation of the students' stance towards the dialogical act, grew out of exercises revolving around efforts to 'paraphrase' (Rogers, 2012) and qualify general evaluative assertions, suspend final judgments regarding a certain issue (see the skeptical practice of 'epoché' in Mezirow, 2000, 2007), discern and unfold conceptual and evaluative possibilities (see 'complexity'), as well as elaborating forms of 'connected knowing' (Belenky & Stanton, 2007), as aspects of a more inclusive and 'permeable' way of thinking (Mezirow, 2000, 2007).

The exercises presented above seemed to significantly strengthen the students' discursive and epistemic agency by allowing them to:

a. to identify the criteria and assumptions that guide their evaluations, as well as the consequences of these criteria and assumptions,

b. to raise productive critical questions, and

c. to not shy away from the inevitable interpretive difficulties of the discursive process.

These competencies helped students formulate a common basis of mutual understanding while cultivating some important presuppositions for the formation of a conscious reflective judgment.

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[17] It is worth noting that Mezirow refers to this kind of judgement as 'critically' reflective (1991, 2000, 2007), referring to the kind of judgement that calls into question pre-established and deeply embedded generalized assumptions (habits of mind) that limit an agent's possibilities of action and understanding. By questioning the general validity of such assumptions, Mezirow's conception of critical reflection seems analogous to Kant's conception of reflective judgement. Additionally though, Mezirow's conception is specifically geared towards assessing the functionality of such assumptions in the context of Adult Learning, and in relation to an adult learner's life and experience.

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Ευρωπαϊκές πολιτικές για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στο ελληνικό συγκείμενο

European policies for (vocational) education and training in the Greek context

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Περίληψη

Το συγκεκριμένο άρθρο αναζητά τον σύγχρονο ρόλο και τους στόχους που εξυπηρετεί η μεταφορά των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών ΔΒΜ για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στην Ελλάδα. Τελικά, αυτό που διαφαίνεται είναι πως, στο ελληνικό συγκείμενο, δεν γνωρίζουμε το αποτύπωμά της μεταφοράς των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών ΔΒΜ για την απασχόληση και την οικονομία ενώ, αντίστοιχα, διαφαίνεται πως έχουν οξυνθεί οι κοινωνικές ανισότητες ως προς την πρόσβαση και τη συμμετοχή στην (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στη χώρα μας και, τελικά, επαναδιαμορφώνεται η σχέση μεταξύ κοινωνικής και εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής.

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Abstract

The present paper seeks to explore the contemporary role and the objectives served by the transfer of European LLL policies for (vocational) education and training in Greece. Ultimately, what emerges is that, in the Greek context, we do not know the imprint of European LLL policies on the economy and employment, while, correspondingly, it appears that social inequalities in terms of access to and participation in (vocational) education and training have been exacerbated and, in the end, the relationship between social and education policies is being reshaped.

Key words: Lifelong Learning (LLL), Social Policy, (European) Education Policy, Policy Transfer

1. Εισαγωγή

Γενικά, ο όρος διά βίου μάθηση (ΔΒΜ) αναφέρεται σε κάθε μαθησιακή δραστηριότητα που αναλαμβάνεται καθόλη τη διάρκεια της ζωής -*from cradle to grave*- και, προφανώς, δεν αποκτάται μόνο στο πλαίσιο της τυπικής εκπαίδευσης αλλά και μέσα από άλλες διαδικασίες μη-τυπικής εκπαίδευσης και άτυπης μάθησης (Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021).

Η UNESCO το 1976 διαμόρφωσε, ίσως, τον πιο εμβληματικό ορισμό αναφορικά με την εκπαίδευση στην ενήλικη φάση της ζωής:

> κάθε εκπαιδευτική διεργασία, κάθε περιεχομένου, επιπέδου ή μεθόδου, είτε πρόκειται για τυπική εκπαίδευση είτε όχι, είτε για διεργασία που επεκτείνει χρονικά ή αντικαθιστά την αρχική εκπαίδευση στα σχολεία, κολέγια και πανεπιστήμια, καθώς και για μαθητεία, μέσω των οποίων άτομα που θεωρούνται ενήλικα από την κοινωνία στην οποία ανήκουν αναπτύσσουν τις ικανότητές τους, εμπλουτίζουν τις γνώσεις τους, βελτιώνουν τα τεχνικά και επαγγελματικά τους προσόντα ή τα προσανατολίζουν προς άλλη κατεύθυνση και επιφέρουν αλλαγές στις στάσεις ή τη συμπεριφορά τους με τη

διπλή προοπτική της πλήρους προσωπικής ανάπτυξης και της συμμετοχής σε μία εναρμονισμένη και αυτοδύναμη κοινωνική, οικονομική και πολιτιστική ανάπτυξη (Rogers, 2002, σελ. 56).

Το παρόν άρθρο, με βάση τη συζήτηση που προηγήθηκε, αποτυπώνει την ευρωπαϊκή στοχοθεσία αναφορικά με τη ΔΒΜ και επιδιώκει να αναδείξει τις διαστάσεις που έλαβε η υλοποίησή της στο ελληνικό συγκείμενο. Σχετικά, το βασικό ερώτημα στο οποίο επιχειρεί να απαντήσει είναι αν και σε ποιο βαθμό οι στόχοι των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών για τη ΔΒΜ υλοποιήθηκαν στη χώρα μας. Υπό αυτήν την έννοια, η παρούσα προσπάθεια δεν εισφέρει νέα γνώση στην, εν εξελίξει, συζήτηση για τις υπάρχουσες δομές και τη λειτουργία της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης στην Ελλάδα. Μάλλον, χρησιμοποιεί τη σχετική πρόσφατη βιβλιογραφική παραγωγή (Δουρκούνας, 2019 ·Καραλής, 2020· Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021· Νεκτάριος κ.ά., 2022· Πρόκου, 2020· Ρεντίφης, 2019· Φωτόπουλος & Ζάγκος, 2016) υπό μία διαφορετική προοπτική, αυτή της μεταφοράς πολιτικής, ως εργαλείο προκειμένου να απαντήσει στο προηγούμενο ερώτημα. Έτσι, στη συνέχεια του παρόντος, αφού περιγράψουμε αδρά, τους στόχους και τις προτεραιότητες των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών για τη ΔΒΜ, κατά την περίοδο από το 2000 έως σήμερα, θα επικεντρωθούμε στο σύγχρονο τοπίο παροχής (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτιση στη χώρα μας.

2. Ευρωπαϊκές πολιτικές ΔΒΜ για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση

Η συζήτηση για τη ΔΒΜ ξεκίνησε να διεξάγεται, συστηματικά, στην Ευρώπη τη δεκαετία του '90. Σημαντικότεροι σταθμοί αυτής της πορείας υπήρξαν, αδιαμφισβήτητα, η παγκόσμια διάσκεψη για την «Εκπαίδευση για Όλους» της UNESCO, το 1990, τα τρία Υπομνήματα της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής για την Τριτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση, την Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση και την Εκπαίδευση από Απόσταση (Τηλεκπαίδευση) το 1991, η θέση σε ισχύ, το 1992, της Συνθήκης του Μάαστριχτ - τα άρθρα 149 και 150 αφορούσαν την παιδεία και την επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση- το ψήφισμα του Συμβουλίου σχετικά με την ποιότητα και την ελκυστικότητα της επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης την 5η Δεκεμβρίου 1994 και, βέβαια, ο ορισμός από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση (ΕΕ) του 1996 ως Ευρωπαϊκού Έτους ΔΒΜ. Την ίδια χρονιά κυκλοφόρησαν τόσο η έκθεση της UNESCO Learning: The treasure within όσο και η αντίστοιχη του ΟΟΣΑ Lifelong Learning for all. Η κοινή Σύμβαση του Συμβουλίου της Ευρώπης και της UNESCO για την Αναγνώριση των Τίτλων Σπουδών Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης στην περιοχή της Ευρώπης (Lisbon Recognition Convention) το 1997 αποτέλεσε, τέλος, ένα ακόμα ορόσημο (Καρυπίδου, 2012· Pepin, 2007· Σταμέλος κ.ά., 2015).

Οι δράσεις που αναλήφθηκαν, όμως, στις 23 και 24 Μαρτίου του 2000 στο Ευρωπαϊκό Συμβούλιο της Λισσαβόνας, σηματοδότησαν, μεταξύ άλλων, την αλλαγή από την προσπάθεια θεσμοθέτησης μίας ευρωπαϊκής πολιτικής για την εκπαίδευση, αρχής γενομένης από τα δύο άρθρα της Συνθήκης του Μάαστριχτ (το 1992), στη διαμόρφωση, προώθηση και εφαρμογή στα κράτη μέλη της Ένωσης, κοινά συμφωνημένων πολιτικών για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση & κατάρτιση (Σταμέλος & Βασιλόπουλος, 2010, 2013). Η Στρατηγική της Λισσαβόνας έθεσε ως κεντρικούς στόχους την οικονομική μεταρρύθμιση, την ενίσχυση της απασχόλησης και τη διασφάλιση της κοινωνικής συνοχής στο πλαίσιο της κοινωνίας της γνώσης. Η ανάληψη δράσεων για την υλοποίηση της ΔΒΜ τέθηκαν στο κέντρο της προσπάθειας για την επίτευξη των τιθέμενων στόχων (Σταμέλος & Βασιλόπουλος, 2013). Ειδικότερα (βλ. και πίνακα 1), τα κράτη μέλη της ΕΕ δεσμεύτηκαν, μεταξύ άλλων, ότι το ποσοστό των ατόμων 25-64 ετών που θα συμμετείχαν σε οποιαδήποτε μορφή εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης θα άγγιζε το 12,5% του πληθυσμού των ενηλίκων έως και το 2010 (Council Resolution on Equal Opportunities for Pupils and Students with Disabilities in Education and Training, 2003).

Πίνακας 1. Οι πολιτικές της Ένωσης στους τομείς της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης & κατάρτισης: Το πρόγραμμα Ε-Κ 2010

Στρατηγικοί στόχοι	Κριτήρια αναφοράς (2010)
Βελτίωση της ποιότητας	α. το μέσο ευρωπαϊκό ποσοστό ατόμων που εγκαταλείπουν πρόωρα το σχολείο να είναι κάτω του 10%,
	β. να αυξηθεί κατά 15% ο συνολικός αριθμός των αποφοίτων σχολών μαθηματικών, θετικών επιστημών και τεχνολογίας και παράλληλα να μειωθεί η ανισορροπία μεταξύ των φύλων σε αυτές τις σπουδές,
Διευκόλυνση της πρόσβασης όλων στην εκπαίδευση και την κατάρτιση	γ. τουλάχιστον 85% των ατόμων ηλικίας 22 ετών να έχει ολοκληρώσει την ανώτερη βαθμίδα της δευτεροβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης,
Άνοιγμα της εκπαίδευσης και της κατάρτιση στον κόσμο	δ. το ποσοστό ατόμων ηλικίας 15 ετών με χαμηλές επιδόσεις ανάγνωσης/κατανόησης να έχει μειωθεί τουλάχιστον κατά 20% σε σύγκριση με το 2000,
	ε. το μέσο επίπεδο συμμετοχής στη ΔΒΜ να φθάνει τουλάχιστον το 12,5% του πληθυσμού των ενηλίκων σε ηλικία εργασίας

Παράλληλα, τα ευρωπαϊκά κράτη, στο πλαίσιο της Διαδικασίας της Μπολώνιας και έως τη συνάντηση της Λουβέν το 2009, προχώρησαν από τη θεωρητική υποστήριξη της ιδέας της ΔΒΜ στην ανάδειξή της ως αναπόσπαστου μέρους της πανεπιστημιακής λειτουργίας (Leuven/Louvain Communiqué, 2009). Την ίδια περίοδο, το Συμβούλιο (Παιδείας), κατόπιν πρότασης της Επιτροπής (Κοινή Έκθεση Προόδου Του Συμβουλίου Και Της Επιτροπής Για Το 2008 Σχετικά Με Την Εφαρμογή Του Προγράμματος Εργασίας Εκπαίδευση Και Κατάρτιση 2010 — Παροχή Δια Βίου Μάθησης Για Γνώση, Δημιουργικότητα Και Καινοτομία, 2008) και αφού είχε ήδη διαπιστωθεί η ανάγκη να αρχίσουν οι εργασίες διαμόρφωσης ενός, σχετικού, ενημερωμένου στρατηγικού πλαισίου, έθεσε το γενικό πλαίσιο της ευρωπαϊκής συνεργασίας για την περίοδο 2010-2020 στους τομείς της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης. Η ΔΒΜ τοποθετήθηκε, και πάλι, «στο κέντρο της διαδικασίας αποτελώντας τη θεμελιώδη αρχή πάνω στην οποία θα βασίζεται ολόκληρο το πλαίσιο καλύπτοντας κάθε είδους μάθηση – τυπική, μη τυπική και άτυπη- σε όλα τα επίπεδα: από την προσχολική και την πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση έως την ανώτατη εκπαίδευση, την επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση και την εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων» (Συμπεράσματα Του Συμβουλίου, Της 12ης Μαΐου 2009, Σχετικά Με Ένα Στρατηγικό Πλαίσιο Για Την Ευρωπαϊκή Συνεργασία Στον Τομέα Της Εκπαίδευσης Και Της Κατάρτισης, 2009). Τα κράτη, από τη μεριά τους, δεσμεύτηκαν ώστε μέχρι το 2020, τουλάχιστον το 15%, κατά μέσο όρο, των ενηλίκων να συμμετέχουν σε προγράμματα ΔΒΜ (βλ. πίνακα 2).

Πίνακας 2. Οι πολιτικές της Ένωσης στους τομείς της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης & κατάρτισης: Το πρόγραμμα Ε-Κ 2020

Στρατηγικοί στόχοι	Κριτήρια αναφοράς (2020)
Ενίσχυση της ΔΒΜ και της κινητικότητας	α. το 15% τουλάχιστον των ενηλίκων κατά μέσο όρο θα πρέπει να συμμετέχει σε ΔΒΜ,
Βελτίωση της ποιότητας και της αποδοτικότητας των συστημάτων εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης	β. το ποσοστό των ατόμων με χαμηλές επιδόσεις στην ανάγνωση, τα μαθηματικά και τις θετικές επιστήμες θα πρέπει να είναι χαμηλότερο από 15%,
Προώθηση της ισότητας, της κοινωνικής συνοχής και της ενεργού ιδιότητας του πολίτη	γ. το ποσοστό των ατόμων 30-34 ετών με τριτοβάθμιο μορφωτικό επίπεδο θα πρέπει να είναι τουλάχιστον 40%,
	δ. το ποσοστό των ατόμων που εγκαταλείπουν πρόωρα την εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση να είναι χαμηλότερο του 10%,
Ενίσχυση της δημιουργικότητας και της καινοτομίας σε όλα τα επίπεδα της εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης.	ε. το 95% τουλάχιστον των παιδιών ηλικίας έναρξης της υποχρεωτικής πρωτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης θα πρέπει να συμμετέχει σε προσχολική εκπαίδευση.

Σχετικά, το Ευρωπαϊκό Συμβούλιο, δυο χρόνια αργότερα, το 2011, κάλεσε τα μέλη του να επικεντρωθούν στην προώθηση ευέλικτων μαθησιακών διαδρομών για τους ενηλίκους, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της ευρύτερης πρόσβασης στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση και στη διαφοροποίηση του φάσματος των ευκαιριών μάθησης ενηλίκων που προσφέρονταν από τα ιδρύματα τριτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης (Council of the European Union, 2011) . Αντίστοιχα, στο Υερεβάν το 2015, οι υπουργοί της Μπολώνιας έδωσαν έμφαση στη συμπερίληψη στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση διαφορετικών τύπων εκπαιδευομένων μέσω της αναγνώρισης της προηγούμενης μάθησης και στη διεύρυνση της πρόσβασης μέσω της δημιουργίας ευέλικτων μαθησιακών διαδρομών (Yeravan Communiqué, 2015) . Στο πλαίσιο της Διαδικασίας της Κοπεγχάγης τα ευρωπαϊκά κράτη προώθησαν τον στόχο της δημιουργίας ενός Ευρωπαϊκού Χώρου (επαγγελματικής) Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης, συμπληρωματικού του Ευρωπαϊκού Χώρου Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης (ΕΧΑΕ), για την ενίσχυση της κινητικότητας των νέων και, κυρίως, των ενηλίκων, όπου τα προσόντα που θα αποκτιούνται σε μια χώρα θα αναγνωρίζονται σε όλη την Ευρώπη, με τη χρήση κοινών πλαισίων, εργαλείων πιστοποίησης αλλά και συγκρίσιμων δεδομένων (Ασδεράκη, 2009· Ασδεράκη & Τσινισιζέλης, 2008· Pepin, 2006· Vassilopoulos et al., 2020). Η Διαδικασία της Κοπεγχάγης καθόρισε τις πολιτικές προτεραιότητες για την επίτευξη του οικονομικού, και δευτερευόντως του κοινωνικού στόχου της στρατηγικής της Λισσαβόνας στον τομέα της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης: «Η ανάπτυξη μιας πραγματικής ευρωπαϊκής αγοράς εργασίας - που αποτελεί ουσιαστικό συμπλήρωμα της ενιαίας αγοράς αγαθών και υπηρεσιών και του ενιαίου νομίσματος - βασίζεται σε μεγάλο βαθμό στην ύπαρξη ενός εξειδικευμένου, προσαρμοστικού και κινητικού εργατικού δυναμικού που θα μπορεί να χρησιμοποιεί τα προσόντα και τις ικανότητές του ως ένα είδος «κοινού νομίσματος» σε όλη την Ευρώπη» (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_04_293).

Οι βασικές στρατηγικές προτεραιότητες της Διαδικασίας της Κοπεγχάγης για την περίοδο 2015-2020, ήταν οι εξής: α) προώθηση της βασισμένης στην εργασία μάθησης, β) έμφαση στα μαθησιακά αποτελέσματα και στους μηχανισμούς διασφάλισης της ποιότητας της επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης, γ) ενίσχυση της πρόσβασης στην επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση μέσα από ευέλικτα συστήματα συμβουλευτικής και πιστοποίησης προσόντων, δ) περαιτέρω ενίσχυση των βασικών δεξιοτήτων και ε) παροχή ευκαιριών επαγγελματικής ανάπτυξης του εκπαιδευτικού προσωπικού της επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης (https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_04_293).

Οι κεντρικοί στόχοι πολιτικής για την περίοδο που διανύουμε (2019-2024) αποτυπώνονται σε αδρές γραμμές στο πλαίσιο της στρατηγικής *agenda* της ΕΕ και είναι οι ακόλουθοι: α) προστασία των πολιτών και των ελευθεριών, β) ανάπτυξη ισχυρής και δυναμικής οικονομικής βάσης, γ) οικοδόμηση κλιματικά ουδέτερης, πράσινης, δίκαιης και κοινωνικής Ευρώπης, και δ) προαγωγή των ευρωπαϊκών συμφερόντων και αξιών στη διεθνή σκηνή (βλ. και https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/strategic-agenda-2024-2029/). Σε αυτή τη βάση, τα σύγχρονα διακυβεύματα που αφορούν τις πολιτικές ΔΒΜ οφείλουν να αναζητηθούν στη Δήλωση του *Osnabrück* του 2020 σχετικά με την επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση ως καταλύτη ανάκαμψης και δίκαιης μετάβασης στην ψηφιακή και πράσινη οικονομία και, βέβαια στις πρόσφατες πρωτοβουλίες της ΕΕ. Συγκεκριμένα, οι Ανακοινώσεις της Επιτροπής σχετικά με τη Στήριξη της απασχόλησης των νέων «Γέφυρα προς την απασχόληση για την επόμενη γενιά» (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0276), και σχετικά με το «Ευρωπαϊκό Θεματολόγιο Δεξιοτήτων» (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274&from=EN) και η Σύσταση του Συμβουλίου σχετικά με την «επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση (ΕΕΚ) για βιώσιμη ανταγωνιστικότητα, κοινωνική δικαιοσύνη και ανθεκτικότητα» (https://eur-

lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01)), αποτελούν τα βασικά κείμενα αναφοράς για την πολιτική της Ένωσης για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση για την περίοδο που διανύουμε επιδιώκοντας να ανταποκριθούν στις σύγχρονες προκλήσεις που αντιμετωπίζουν οι χώρες μέλη της ΕΕ: ύπαρξη ανέργων με χαμηλή εξειδίκευση και χαμηλή συμμετοχή σε προγράμματα (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης. Χωρίς αμφιβολία τέλος, η διαμόρφωση του Ευρωπαϊκού Χώρου Εκπαίδευσης, το 2025, αποτελεί ίσως την εξέλιξη με τη μεγαλύτερη επίδραση στα τεκταινόμενα στο πεδίο. Δεν θα επεκταθούμε όμως στο συγκεκριμένο ζήτημα στο πλαίσιο του παρόντος.

Κλείνοντας την ενότητα, και με βάση όσα αναφέρθηκαν προηγούμενα, μπορούμε να καταλήξουμε στις ακόλουθες διαπιστώσεις σε σχέση με το περιεχόμενο των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών για τη ΔΒΜ. Η ΔΒΜ δεν αποτελούσε προτεραιότητα της ΕΕ μέχρι τη δεκαετία του 1990. Από το 1990 και μετά η ΔΒΜ αρχίζει να αναγνωρίζεται ως ένα βασικό μέσο για την επίτευξη της οικονομικής ανταγωνιστικότητας της ΕΕ και τη διασφάλιση της κοινωνικής συνοχής –δεδομένο που φέρνει τα εκπαιδευτικά συστήματα στο κέντρο της μεταρρυθμιστικής προσοχής. Επικεντρώνει δε το ενδιαφέρον της στις δομές της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης αφού αυτές θεωρούνται πως συνδέονται αποτελεσματικότερα με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας. Η μάθηση κατά τη διάρκεια της ζωής γίνεται αντιληπτή ως εκπαίδευση κατά τη διάρκεια της εργασιακής ζωής (Πρόκου, 2020). Οι δραστηριότητες, δηλαδή, στο πλαίσιο της ΔΒΜ δεν αφορούν όλους τους πολίτες, αλλά τους εργαζόμενους ή εν δυνάμει εργαζόμενους και δεν αφορούν όλες τις διαστάσεις της προσωπικότητας του πολίτη, αλλά περιορίζονται σε εκείνες που έχουν μια αυστηρά εργαλειακή σχέση με τις ανάγκες της επαγγελματικής του ζωής (Καραλής, 2010). Η διαμόρφωση ευέλικτων μαθησιακών διαδρομών, η διεύρυνση της πρόσβασης στην τριτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, η ενίσχυση των δεξιοτήτων, η έμφαση στη μαθητεία και την πρακτική άσκηση αλλά και η ανάπτυξη εργαλείων πιστοποίησης των προσόντων στη βάση των μαθησιακών αποτελεσμάτων αποτελούν στόχους που κυριαρχούν στον επίσημο λόγο της ΕΕ υπογραμμίζοντας την οικονομική λειτουργία της ΔΒΜ. Παράλληλα, η εστίαση μετατοπίζεται προς τον εργαζόμενο και την απασχολησιμότητά του (Ασδεράκη & Τσινισιζέλης, 2008· Παπαδάκης, 2006· Πρόκου, 2020) καθήκον για το οποίο τα άτομα πρέπει να πάρουν την ευθύνη τόσο της επιλογής όσο και της χρηματοδότησής της. Στις υποχρεώσεις των κρατών, από την άλλη μεριά, τίθεται η απαίτηση να βρίσκονται οι πολίτες τους, συνεχώς, στη μαθησιακή διαδικασία (Πρόκου, 2020). Σε ένα τέτοιο πλαίσιο, πέραν των άλλων πιθανών συνεπειών, οι ανισότητες, σε βάρος των κοινωνικά ευάλωτων, διαιωνίζονται ενώ αυξάνει ο κίνδυνος κοινωνικού αποκλεισμού (Papadakis, 2022)!

Μία συνολική αποτίμηση των αποτελεσμάτων των πολιτικών της ΕΕ για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση δείχνει πως κατάσταση στο πεδίο, για την περίοδο που διανύουμε, χαρακτηρίζεται από την ύπαρξη ανέργων με χαμηλή εξειδίκευση και χαμηλή συμμετοχή σε προγράμματα επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης (Papadakis, 2022). Πάντως, η επιτυχία των πολιτικών εκπαιδευτικής μεταρρύθμισης της ΕΕ φαίνεται πως εξαρτάται, μεταξύ άλλων, από δύο βασικούς παράγοντες: την ετοιμότητα (ή/και την πρόθεση) των εμπλεκομένων να εφαρμόσουν τις σχετικές πολιτικές και τη σχέση μεταξύ των πολιτικών στον τομέα της εκπαίδευσης και άλλων τομέων, όπως είναι αυτοί της οικονομίας και της απασχόλησης.

Για αυτό το λόγο στο σημείο αυτό είναι σημαντικό να στραφούμε στο σύγχρονο τοπίο παροχής υπηρεσιών (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης στην Ελλάδα -τυπικής και μη-τυπικής.

3. Το σύγχρονο τοπίο παροχής υπηρεσιών (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης στην Ελλάδα

Ο θεσμός της εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων στη χώρα μας, παρά τις αλλεπάλληλες νομοθετικές πρωτοβουλίες που είχαν αναλάβει οι ελληνικές κυβερνήσεις, ήδη από το 1929, είχε

περιορισμένη ανάπτυξη και μικρή εμβέλεια (Καραλής, 2010). Το σύγχρονο τοπίο παροχής υπηρεσιών (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης, πάντως, διαμορφώθηκε και συνέχισε να λειτουργεί στη βάση της κοινοτικής χρηματοδότησης μετά το 1980. Χαρακτηριστικά, ο Ιωαννίδης (2017) αναφέρεται σε, σχεδόν, ολοκληρωτική εξάρτηση του κλάδου από τα συγχρηματοδοτούμενα προγράμματα των ευρωπαϊκών διαρθρωτικών ταμείων στα πλαίσια των διαδοχικών ΚΠΣ -το Α΄ ΚΠΣ (1989-1993), το Β΄ ΚΠΣ (1994-1999) και Γ΄ ΚΠΣ (2000-2006)- και του ΕΣΠΑ. Η αλήθεια είναι πως η είσοδος της Ελλάδας στην ΕΟΚ, το 1981, και η συνακόλουθη κοινοτική χρηματοδότηση προκάλεσε ευνοϊκές συνθήκες για την ανάπτυξη του θεσμού της λαϊκής επιμόρφωσης στη βάση της ενεργοποίησης των φορέων του ευρύτερου δημόσιου τομέα (Λαϊκή Επιμόρφωση, ΕΛΚΕΠΑ, ΟΑΕΔ, ΕΕΤΑΑ, ΕΟΜΜΕΧ). Κατά τη δεκαετία του '90 όμως, σύμφωνα με τις επιταγές της ευρωπαϊκής πολιτικής για τη ΔΒΜ, τα γνωστικά αντικείμενα των διαθέσιμων προγραμμάτων περιορίστηκαν στον τομέα της συνεχιζόμενης επαγγελματικής κατάρτισης και η χρηματοδότηση μειώθηκε αισθητά (Ρεντίφης, 2019). Το σύστημα παροχής υπηρεσιών στο επίπεδο της συνεχιζόμενης επαγγελματικής κατάρτισης αναδιοργανώθηκε ριζικά με τη δραστηριοποίηση των ΚΕΚ και ιδιωτικοποιήθηκε εκτενώς (ΙΟΒΕ, 2021· Καβασακάλης, 2018· Καραλής, 2010· Φωτόπουλος & Ζάγκος, 2016). Σε ένα χαοτικό τοπίο παροχής υπηρεσιών ΔΒΜ, από το 2000 και μετά, καταβλήθηκαν προσπάθειες για τον θεσμικό εκσυγχρονισμό του συστήματος με στόχο την ορθολογική αξιοποίηση των υπό διάθεση πόρων αλλά και τον πιο αποτελεσματικό συντονισμό των δραστηριοτήτων στο πεδίο, κυρίως, της συνεχιζόμενης επαγγελματικής κατάρτισης (Ιωαννίδης, 2017· Καβασακάλης, 2018· Καραλής, 2010· Φωτόπουλος & Ζάγκος, 2016). Το ελληνικό κράτος συγκεκριμένα, με το Ν. 3191/2003 θέσπισε το Εθνικό Σύστημα Σύνδεσης της Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης με την Απασχόληση (ΕΣΣΕΕΚΑ), το οποίο επιχείρησε τη σύνδεση της αρχικής με τη συνεχιζόμενη επαγγελματική κατάρτιση και τη σύνδεσή τους με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας. Τελικά, ενεργοποιήθηκε με τρία χρόνια καθυστέρηση (2006) και στη συνέχεια υπολειτούργησε έως το 2009 και ύστερα αδρανοποιήθηκε (Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021). Το έτος 2005, ο Ν. 3369/2005 έδωσε έμφαση στην πιστοποίηση των προγραμμάτων συνεχιζόμενης επαγγελματικής κατάρτισης στη βάση επαγγελματικών περιγραμμάτων. Ωστόσο, η στρεβλή δόμηση του συστήματος κατά την προηγούμενη περίοδο, η έλλειψη κουλτούρας Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων και οι συχνές παλινωδίες της κρατικής πολιτικής δυσχέραιναν σημαντικά την επιτυχία του εγχειρήματος (Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021).

Η ψήφιση του Ν. 3879/2010, επιχείρησε να διαμορφώσει, για πρώτη φορά, τις εθνικές προτεραιότητες στον τομέα της ΔΒΜ στην Ελλάδα κοντά στα ευρωπαϊκά πρότυπα (ΙΟΒΕ, 2021; Φωτόπουλος & Ζάγκος, 2016). Θεσμοθέτησε το Εθνικό Πλαίσιο Προσόντων (ΕΠΠ) και το Εθνικό Δίκτυο ΔΒΜ ενώ έθεσε ορισμένες προδιαγραφές με σκοπό τη διασφάλιση ποιότητας στις δομές (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης. Η επαγγελματική κατάρτιση και η γενική εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων προβλήθηκαν, σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, ως δύο ισότιμοι πυλώνες και υπάγονταν (με το Π.Δ. 24/2010) στο Υπουργείο Παιδείας (Ρεντίφης, 2019). Τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά του συγκεκριμένου νομοθετικού πλαισίου, σε ευθεία σύνδεση με τις ευρωπαϊκές πολιτικές πρωτοβουλίες, όπως παρουσιάστηκαν προηγούμενα, διαμορφώθηκαν ως εξής: διάθεση σύνδεσης των επιμορφωτικών αναγκών των ενηλίκων με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας, αναγνώριση του ρόλου των μαθησιακών αποτελεσμάτων, αναγνώριση και πιστοποίηση εναλλακτικών εκπαιδευτικών διαδρομών, αποκέντρωση των δράσεων ΔΒΜ στους δήμους και στις περιφέρειες, ενίσχυση των κοινωνικά ευπαθών ομάδων, διασφάλιση της ποιότητας των εκπαιδευτικών δράσεων (ΙΟΒΕ, 2021· Ιωαννίδης, 2017· Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021· Πρόκου, 2020· Φωτόπουλος & Ζάγκος, 2016). Την ψήφιση του συγκεκριμένου νόμου ακολούθησε η ψήφιση άλλων 10 νόμων και δεκάδων άλλων νομο-θετικών πράξεων ως το 2020 -χαρακτηριστικό μιας υπερδραστηριότητας που αποτυπώνει την ένταση των αντικρουόμενων συμφερόντων που επιχειρήθηκε να ικανοποιηθούν στο συγκεκριμένο τομέα και της πολυνομίας που χαρακτηρίζει ευρύτερα τη χώρα.

Το πεδίο, συνοψίζοντας, έδειχνε να χαρακτηρίζεται από διάφορες παθογένειες. Καταρχάς, τη συχνή εναλλαγή πολιτικών υπευθύνων, που, συνήθως συνοδευόταν από αλλαγή πολιτικής κατεύθυνσης και, τελικά, επιφανειακές αλλαγές που αποφασίζονταν από πάνω προς τα κάτω -*top down* (Νεκτάριος κ.ά., 2022). Δεύτερον, την έλλειψη στρατηγικού σχεδιασμού που αντικαθίστατο από μία κυρίαρχη πολιτική απορρόφησης κοινοτικών κονδυλίων και διανομής τους, συχνά, με μη αξιοκρατικό τρόπο. Σε σχέση με το πρώτο, χαρακτηριστικά, μετά το 2015, έπαψε να καταρτίζεται το Εθνικό Πρόγραμμα ΔΒΜ. Αναφορικά με το δεύτερο δε, τις χρησιμοθηρικές πρακτικές καταδίκασαν με έμφαση οι διευθύνοντες των ερευνητικών κέντρων του ΙΜΕ-ΓΣΕΒΕΕ και ΙΝΕ-ΓΣΕΕ που υποστήριξαν ότι η επαγγελματική κατάρτιση των ενηλίκων στο πλαίσιο (συγ-)χρηματοδοτούμενων από κοινοτικούς πόρους δράσεων λειτούργησε ως

> μέσο συντήρησης μίας νεοπαγούς βιομηχανίας κατάρτισης, ρουσφετολογικός μηχανισμός, τρόπος συλλογής ψήφων, μέσο τεχνητής μείωσης των ποσοστών ανεργίας, δίαυλος για τη διάδοση και την εδραίωση ευέλικτων μορφών απασχόλησης […], ατμομηχανή απορρόφησης κοινοτικών πόρων, μηχανισμός αναπαραγωγής και ισχυροποίησης πολιτικών και οικονομικών συμφερόντων σε τοπικό επίπεδο, μέσο αθέμιτων συναλλακτικών πρακτικών μεταξύ φορέων παροχής κατάρτισης και δικαιούχων (υποψηφίων προς κατάρτιση) και πολλά άλλα (Λιντζέρης & Γούλας, 2017, σελ. 15).

Επιπρόσθετα, το σύστημα στο επίπεδο της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης εξακολούθησε να λειτουργεί υπό ένα «κρατικιστικό» μοντέλο διακυβέρνησης (Πρόκου, 2009, 2020) παρά την αδυναμία ανταπόκρισης της κεντρικής διοίκησης, ενώ ελάχιστα αξιοποιήθηκε η συμβολή και τεχνογνωσία των κοινωνικών εταίρων (Φωτόπουλος, 2013) ή/και φορέων καλών πρακτικών στα χαμηλότερα επίπεδα εξουσίας - Περιφέρειες, Δήμοι (Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021).

Ο Ν. 4763/2020, σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, θεσμοθέτησε αρκετές αλλαγές με πιο βασικές, ίσως, τη σύνταξη Στρατηγικού Σχεδίου για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση με προοπτική τριετίας, λόγω της δυναμικότητας των επιμέρους πεδίων, και την καθιέρωση ενός Εθνικού Συστήματος Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης (ΕΕΚ) για την αποφυγή επικαλύψεων δομών και υπηρεσιών. Σχετικά, ιδρύθηκαν νέες δομές (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης -Επαγγελματικές Σχολές Κατάρτισης, Πρότυπα Επαγγελματικά Λύκεια, Πειραματικά και Θεματικά ΙΕΚ, ΙΕΚ ειδικής αγωγής κ.λπ.- αναπτυσσόμενες στα επίπεδα 3, 4 & 5 του ΕΠΠ ενώ υπήρξαν ρυθμίσεις και για τις διαδικασίες πιστοποίησής τους. Παράλληλα, η συγκρότηση του Κεντρικού Συμβουλίου ΕΕΚ με τη συμμετοχή εκπροσώπων από υπουργεία, κοινωνικούς εταίρους (οργανώσεις εργοδοτών και εργαζομένων) και τα επιμελητήρια, τα Κλαδικά Συμβούλια Δεξιοτήτων και η θεσμοθέτηση των Συμβουλίων Σύνδεσης με την Παραγωγή και την Αγορά Εργασίας σε περιφερειακό επίπεδο στόχευαν στην αμεσότερη και αποτελεσματικότερη διασύνδεση της επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης με τις πραγματικές ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας. Από την άλλη μεριά βέβαια, η κριτική που ασκείται σε αυτές τις ρυθμίσεις εστιάζει στο γεγονός πως στο ΚΣΕΕΚ δεν συμμετέχουν εκπρόσωποι φορέων που παρέχουν γενική εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων. Δεύτερον, δεν συμμετέχουν εκπρόσωποι των ΚΕΔΙΒΙΜ, ούτε ορισμένων Υπουργείων (λ.χ. Δικαιοσύνης, Εξωτερικών, Πολιτισμού), που πραγματοποιούν για το προσωπικό τους δράσεις (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης νευραλγικής σημασίας.

Σε κάθε περίπτωση, η (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στην Ελλάδα, εντός του συγκεκριμένου νομοθετικού πλαισίου, προσέλαβε δύο μορφές. Από τη μία μεριά, η αρχική επαγγελματική κατάρτιση στοχεύει στην παροχή βασικών επαγγελματικών γνώσεων και δεξιοτήτων, με στόχο την ένταξη ή επανένταξη του ανθρώπινου δυναμικού στην αγορά εργασία και παρέχεται από τα ΙΕΚ στο πλαίσιο του τυπικού εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος (επίπεδο 5 του ΕΠΠ). Η συνεχιζόμενη επαγγελματική κατάρτιση, από την άλλη μεριά,

συμπληρώνει, εκσυγχρονίζει ή και αναβαθμίζει τις γνώσεις και δεξιότητες που έχουν αποκτηθεί σε συστήματα δευτεροβάθμιας ή τριτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης ή αρχικής επαγγελματικής κατάρτισης ή από την επαγγελματική εμπειρία, με στόχο την ένταξη ή επανένταξη στην αγορά εργασίας. Παρέχεται εκτός του τυπικού εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος και υλοποιείται από τα Κέντρα Διά Βίου Μάθησης (ΚΔΒΜ), τα Κέντρα Επιμόρφωσης και Διά Βίου Μάθησης (ΚΕΔΙΒΙΜ) των ΑΕΙ, το Εθνικό Κέντρο Δημόσιας Διοίκησης και Αυτοδιοίκησης (ΕΚΔΔΑ) και ποικίλους άλλους δημόσιους και ιδιωτικούς φορείς (IOBE, 2021· Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021· Πρόκου, 2020· Ρεντίφης, 2019).

Μεγάλο ενδιαφέρον παρουσιάζει, σε αυτή τη βάση, το γεγονός πως οι φορείς που θα αναμέναμε ότι αποτελούν τον κορμό των παρόχων (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης (ΚΔΒΜ, ΙΕΚ, ΣΔΕ, ΕΚΔΔΑ, καθώς και τα ΑΕΙ και τα κολέγια) απορροφούν, συνολικά, μόλις το 31% των συμμετεχόντων και παρέχουν το 35% των διδακτικών ωρών -με τους άλλους παρόχους να μοιράζονται μεταξύ εμπορικών οργανισμών και επιμελητηρίων, επιχειρήσεων, συλλογικών εργοδοτικών οργανισμών, μη-κερδοσκοπικών οργανισμών και ιδιωτών (Commission of the European Communites & DG Education, 2018). Οι τελευταίοι δε, οι ιδιώτες - φροντιστήρια ξένων γλωσσών, πληροφορικής, και κάθε άλλου είδους επιμόρφωση επαγγελματιών, φοιτητών κ.λπ.- έρχονται πρώτοι ως προς την απορρόφηση συμμετεχόντων (19%). Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, η συμμετοχή, συγκεκριμένα, στη συνεχιζόμενη επαγγελματική κατάρτιση παρέμεινε, κατά την περίοδο αναφοράς, σε πολύ χαμηλά επίπεδα και διαμορφώθηκε σε σημαντικό βαθμό με βάση την κατάσταση απασχόλησης, το εκπαιδευτικό επίπεδο, την ηλικία, το φύλο και τον τόπο διαμονής (Δουργκούνας, 2021). Μάλιστα, μεταξύ 2013 και 2019 διευρύνθηκε το χάσμα αναφορικά με τους δείκτες συμμετοχής ανάμεσα σε άτομα με επαρκές/ανεπαρκές εισόδημα (από 1,5 προς 1 το 2013 σε 1,63 προς 1 το 2019) και ανάμεσα σε εργαζόμενους/ανέργους (Καραλής, 2020). Γεγονός, που καταδεικνύει, αν μη τι άλλο, ότι η (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση λειτούργησε ως ενισχυτικός παράγοντας των υφιστάμενων κοινωνικών ανισοτήτων. Σε αυτά, μπορούμε να προσθέσουμε και το έλλειμα δεξιοτήτων στο ανθρώπινο δυναμικό της χώρας καθώς η Ελλάδα βρίσκεται στην προτελευταία θέση στον ευρωπαϊκό δείκτη δεξιοτήτων ESI του CEDEFOP (IOBE, 2021) με κύρια χαρακτηριστικά τα μειωμένα επίπεδα ανάπτυξης και ενεργοποίησης δεξιοτήτων αλλά και, κυρίως, τη χαμηλή αντιστοίχιση δεξιοτήτων με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας (IOBE, 2021; Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021). Παράλληλα, την περίοδο 2012-2019, σημειώθηκε συρρίκνωση του τομέα της γενικής εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων. Σταμάτησε η λειτουργία των Σχολών Γονέων και των Κέντρων Συνοδευτικών και Υποστηρικτικών Υπηρεσιών και υπολειτούργησαν τα ΣΔΕ και τα ΚΔΒΜ των Δήμων. Είναι ενδεικτικό, ότι στην περίοδο 2014-2019, διατέθηκαν από τους πόρους του ΕΠΑΝΑΔ μόλις 1,8% για τα ΣΔΕ, 1,7% για τα ΚΔΒΜ των Δήμων, και 0,6% για προγράμματα εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων που αφορούν κοινωνικά ευπαθείς ομάδες πέραν των ανέργων. Οι δημόσιες δαπάνες αντίστοιχα, για την εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων -μέρος της υποχρεωτικής εθνικής συμμετοχής σε προγράμματα που χρηματοδοτούνταν από ευρωπαϊκούς πόρους- σύμφωνα με μελέτη της Ευρωπαϊκής Επιτροπής, μειώθηκαν μεταξύ 2010-2016 (Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021).

Πίνακας 3. Οι προβλέψεις του νομοθετικού πλαισίου και η (προβληματική) κατάσταση στο πεδίο

Προβλέψεις Ν. 3879/2010	Προβλέψεις Ν. 4763/2020	Η (προβληματική) κατάσταση στο πεδίο
Διαμόρφωση εθνικών προτεραιοτήτων στον τομέα της ΔΒΜ στην Ελλάδα κοντά στα ευρωπαϊκά πρότυπα	Σύνταξη Στρατηγικού Σχεδίου για την ΕΕΚ & ΔΒΜ (τριετής προοπτική)	Έλλειψη στρατηγικού σχεδιασμού - έμφαση στην απορρόφηση κονδυλίων της ΕΕ - Συχνή αλλαγή πολιτικής κατεύθυνσης
Θεσμοθέτηση εθνικού Δικτύου ΔΒΜ	Θεσμοθέτηση ΕΣΕΕΚ το οποίο αναπτύσσεται στα επίπεδα 3, 4 & 5	Αλληλοεπικαλύψεις μεταξύ δομών

	του ΕΠΠ	μάθησης
Σύνδεση επιμορφωτικών αναγκών των ενηλίκων με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας	Διασύνδεση της ΕΕΚ & ΔΒΜ με την αγορά εργασίας, με την ουσιαστική συμμετοχή των κοινωνικών εταίρων στον σχεδιασμό	Προβληματική διασύνδεση με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας – έλλειμμα δεξιοτήτων (επιλογή ειδικοτήτων με βάση συντεχνιακά συμφέροντα, «σχολειοποίηση»)
Διασφάλιση της ποιότητας των εκπαιδευτικών δράσεων	Προώθηση της αριστείας, της έρευνας και της καινοτομίας στη διδασκαλία στην ΕΕΚ	Πλήρης απουσία κουλτούρας *monitoring & evaluation* - προβληματική ποιότητα
Αποκέντρωση των δράσεων ΔΒΜ στους δήμους και στις περιφέρειες	Ενίσχυση του βαθμού αυτονομίας των μονάδων ΕΕΚ, με ενεργό ρόλο των εκπροσώπων της τοπικής αυτοδιοίκησης και της τοπικής κοινωνίας	Μικρή συμμετοχή κοινωνικών εταίρων, Δήμων και Περιφερειών στο σχεδιασμό του συστήματος
Αναγνώριση του ρόλου των μαθησιακών αποτελεσμάτων	Συνολική αναμόρφωση των προγραμμάτων σπουδών των φορέων ΕΕΚ	Αρρυθμίες στην οργάνωση του συστήματος - παγίωση ειδικοτήτων, απαξιωμένος εργαστηριακός εξοπλισμός
Αναγνώριση και πιστοποίηση των εναλλακτικών εκπαιδευτικών διαδρομών – Θεσμοθέτηση ΕΠΠ	Αναβάθμιση και επέκταση του θεσμού της πρακτικής άσκησης και της μαθητείας	Έλλειψη αξιοπιστίας στην πιστοποίηση των επαγγελματικών προσόντων
		Χαμηλή συμμετοχή – κοινωνικές ανισότητες

Πηγή: (ΙΟΒΕ, 2021· Ιωαννίδης, 2017· Καραλής, 2020· Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021· Ρεντίφης, 2019· ΥΠΕΠΘ, 2022· Φωτόπουλος & Ζάγκος, 2016)

Κλείνουμε τις αναφορές μας υπογραμμίζοντας το γεγονός πως, στην Ελλάδα, δεν υπάρχουν ερευνητικά στοιχεία που να τεκμηριώνουν τον ρόλο της συμμετοχής στη συνεχιζόμενη επαγγελματική κατάρτιση στο κομμάτι της ένταξης των ανέργων στην απασχόληση (Δουργκούνας, 2021· ΙΟΒΕ, 2021). Άλλοι συγγραφείς αναφέρονται στην προβληματική συσχέτιση του πεδίου με την απασχόληση και τις ανάγκες της οικονομίας και την απουσία ευρύτερων διαρθρωτικών αλλαγών σε αυτούς τους τομείς (Ιωαννίδης, 2017· Πρόκου, 2022· Σουλιώτης κ.ά., 2023). Η μελέτη των Νεκτάριου κ.ά. (2022), για την αποτελεσματικότητα της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης στην Ελλάδα εξηγούν ότι, από τη μία μεριά, στο επίπεδο του νομοθετικού πλαισίου, τίθενται ποιοτικοί στόχοι και, από την άλλη, δεν υπάρχουν στατιστικά δεδομένα για αρκετές παραμέτρους καθορισμού της αποδοτικότητας του συστήματος. Οι εισροές, οι διαδικασίες και οι εκροές του συστήματος δεν αξιολογούνται και, το κυριότερο, δεν έχει θεσμοθετηθεί τέτοια υποχρέωση (Νεκτάριος κ.ά., 2022).

4. Συμπεράσματα

Στο συγκεκριμένο άρθρο αναζητήθηκε ο σύγχρονος ρόλος και οι στόχοι που εξυπηρετεί η μεταφορά των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών ΔΒΜ για την (επαγγελματική) εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στην Ελλάδα. Ειδικότερα, συνοψίσαμε την πρόσφατη, σχετική, βιβλιογραφική παραγωγή στη χώρα αφού πρώτα αποτυπώσαμε, σε αδρές γραμμές, τους στόχους των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών για τη ΔΒΜ κατά την περίοδο, ειδικά, μετά το 2000.

Αυτό που διεφάνη από τη συζήτηση στις προηγούμενες ενότητες είναι πως η ΕΕ ανέπτυξε το ενδιαφέρον της για τη ΔΒΜ μετά το 1990 στο πλαίσιο μιας εργαλειακής λογικής όπου η έμφαση αποδόθηκε στις δομές της (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης οι οποίες θεωρήθηκε πως συνδέονται αποτελεσματικότερα με την εξυπηρέτηση των αναγκών της αγοράς εργασίας. Η στρατηγική της Λισσαβόνας, στην αρχική ή και στην αναθεωρημένη

μορφή της - Στρατηγική Ευρώπη 2020 - βασίστηκε στην προώθηση και εφαρμογή μεταρρυθμίσεων με δύο, κατά βάση, στόχους που σχετίζονταν, έμμεσα ή και άμεσα με τα συστήματα ΔΒΜ στα κράτη μέλη: α) έναν, αμιγώς, οικονομικό για την ολοκλήρωση της εσωτερικής αγοράς και την προετοιμασία της μετάβασης σε μια οικονομία και σε μία κοινωνία βασισμένες στη γνώση - μέσω της ενίσχυσης της διαδικασίας διαρθρωτικών μεταρρυθμίσεων για την ανταγωνιστικότητα και την καινοτομία, και β) έναν κοινωνικό αναφορικά με τον εκσυγχρονισμό του ευρωπαϊκού κοινωνικού μοντέλου, την επένδυση στον άνθρωπο και την καταπολέμηση του κοινωνικού αποκλεισμού.

Την ίδια περίοδο, μετά το 1990, στη χώρα μας ξεκίνησαν να υιοθετούνται πολιτικές κοντά στα ευρωπαϊκά πρότυπα. Το σύστημα (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης διαμορφώθηκε, σχεδόν αποκλειστικά, με βάση τις κοινοτικές χρηματοδοτήσεις (IOBE, 2021· Ιωαννίδης, 2017· Κόκκος κ.ά., 2021) ενώ και οι νομοθετικές παρεμβάσεις του ελληνικού κράτους, διαχρονικά, έλαβαν υπόψη τους τον κυρίαρχο ευρωπαϊκό λόγο (Δουργκούνας, 2021). Μεταξύ άλλων, αύξηση της συμμετοχής με την υιοθέτηση ευέλικτων μαθησιακών διαδρομών, διεύρυνση της πρόσβασης σε δράσεις (επαγγελματικής) εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης, ανάπτυξη εργαλείων πιστοποίησης, ποιότητα των παρεχόμενων υπηρεσιών, έμφαση στις δεξιότητες και, κυρίως, σύνδεση με τις ανάγκες της αγοράς εργασίας. Τελικά, λίγο λιγότερο από μισό αιώνα μετά, οφείλουμε να προβληματιζόμαστε αναφορικά με τους στόχους που εξυπηρέτησε η μεταφορά των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών ΔΒΜ στη χώρα μας (βλ. και πίνακα 3).

Στην ελληνική περίπτωση, αφενός, δεν μας είναι γνωστό το αποτύπωμα της μεταφοράς των ευρωπαϊκών πολιτικών ΔΒΜ στην απασχόληση και την οικονομία. Αφετέρου, τίθεται εν αμφιβόλω η επίτευξη του στόχου της κοινωνικής ένταξης και της αντιμετώπισης του κοινωνικού αποκλεισμού εντός ενός συστήματος που το χαρακτηρίζουν η χαμηλή συμμετοχή και η όξυνση των κοινωνικών ανισοτήτων, ειδικά, σε ό,τι αφορά την πρόσβαση και τη συμμετοχή στο επίπεδο της συνεχιζόμενης επαγγελματικής κατάρτισης.

Σε ένα άλλο επίπεδο, οι ευρωπαϊκές πολιτικές ΔΒΜ για την ενίσχυση της απασχολησιμότητας υπό την ευθύνη του ατόμου διατηρούν πολλαπλές συνέπειες και για αυτό που έχουμε συνηθίσει να αποκαλούμε κοινωνική πολιτική και κράτος πρόνοιας και, βέβαια, τη σχέση τους με την εκπαιδευτική πολιτική (Βενιέρης, 2006· Παπαδάκης, 2003· Σακελλαρόπουλος, 2001, 2018· Σταμέλος, 2009· Σταμέλος & Βασιλόπουλος, 2004· Φερώνας & Λαλιώτη, 2021). Ζήτημα που αποτέλεσε και την αφορμή για την αρχική ενασχόληση με τη θεματική του συγκεκριμένου άρθρου.

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