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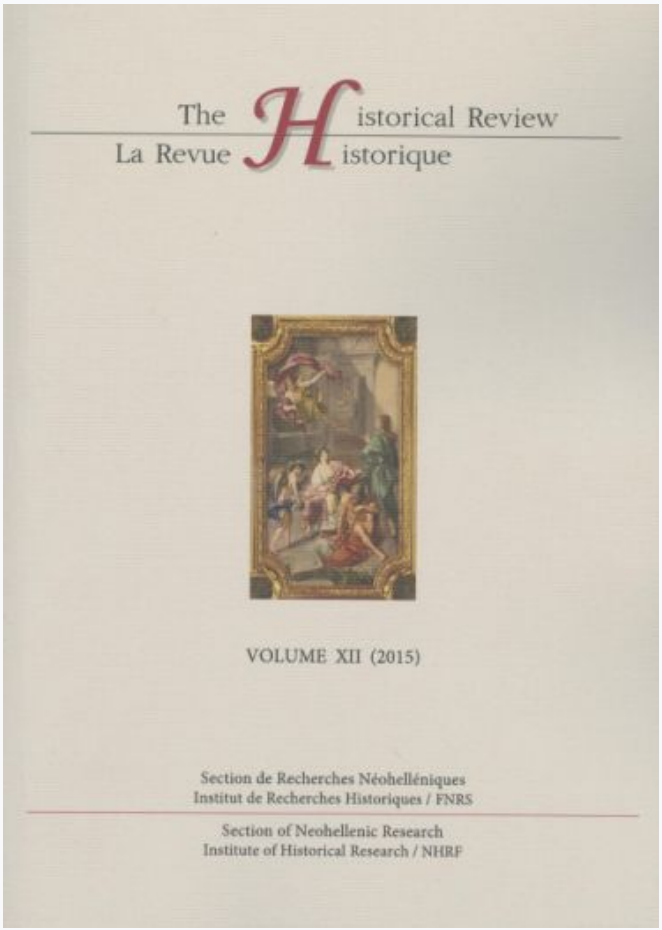

The "Art of Commerce": An Outline of Commercial Education in Twentieth-century Greece

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THE "ART OF COMMERCE":
AN OUTLINE OF COMMERCIAL EDUCATION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY GREECE*

Maria Christina Chatziioannou and Flora Tsilaga

Abstract: The first half of the twentieth century in Greece was marked by consecutive military and civil conflicts that caused profound territorial, demographic and social changes. The movement of vast numbers of young peasants from rural areas to the capital coincided with the broadening of internal trade, a proliferation of industrial investments and the intense urbanization of Athens and other Greek cities, especially during the interwar period. This article examines education concerning the "art of commerce", a more flexible type of training in comparison with its strictly technical equivalent; a form of education that was associated with a completely different outlook compared to the traditional apprenticeship guilds of the nineteenth century. In this context, the essay seeks to emphasize the ways in which a professional group, recognized by the state through its own associations, was specifically created and developed and how this group envisaged creating the sole educational opportunity for its own members, those working in the field of retail.

Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century in Greece was marked by consecutive military campaigns and ensuing civil conflicts that resulted in major territorial, demographic and social modifications. In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), Greece gained new territories, adding a population of approximately 2,000,000 to the 2,800,000 already living in the country. Likewise, the Asia Minor Campaign (1922) that followed World War I brought an estimated influx of 1,200,000 refugees.[1] Last but not least, World War II and the ensuing Civil War (1940-1949) resulted in the dislocation of population masses from rural to urban areas, with a marked increase in the population of Athens.[2]

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[1] *Στατιστική επετηρίς της Ελλάδος, 1931* [Statistical yearbook of Greece, 1931], Athens: National Printing Office, 1931, pp. 30, 104-105.

[2] Angeliki E. Laiou, "Population Movements in the Greek Countryside during the Civil War", in Lars Baerentzen *et al*. (eds), *Studies in the History of the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987, pp. 55-104.

This period of tremendous turmoil was also one of transition. The relocation of large numbers of young peasants from rural areas to the capital coincided with the broadening of internal trade, increased industrial investments and the gradual embourgeoisement of society, especially during the interwar period. On the eve of World War I, the Greek industrial sector employed just a small share of the workforce and accounted for some 25% of the national income. According to the industrial census of 1920, there were some 34,000 industrial enterprises, the majority of which employed 1-5 workers, while only 488 factories employed more than 25 workers. Therefore, the bulk of the industrial sector was comprised of small manufacturers, of whom 70% specialized in food processing.[3] While salaries and wages of civil servants seem to have increased falsely for a decade (from 1912 to 1922), net salaries and wages of blue-collar workers fell steadily. During the same period, the price index quadrupled, and a wave of strikes, particularly in 1918-1919, erupted. The urbanization that had been increasing steadily since the beginning of the twentieth century accelerated in the first decades with the influx of refugees.

Legislation on education was enacted to deal with the new needs of the economy and with the urban unemployed. Among the key elements of these reforms was the promotion of vocational education, which had thus far been developed by collective initiatives of professional associations, within the boundaries of legislative educational policies, primarily as "private" concerns corresponding to actual economic and social requirements and demands. In this context, the establishment of daytime and evening commercial secondary schools combined the education of the unemployed and unskilled youth with their rapid employment in relatively specialized jobs. In almost every case, working in the vast trade businesses (retail stores, factories and warehouses) absorbed demographic mobility, especially in the aftermath of war operations, due to its nature as flexible employment suitable for peasants, internal immigrants and refugees. Although vocational trade education was aimed at both boys and girls, as opposed to other fields of skilled work which were more gender-oriented, male shop assistants prevailed in the period under examination. With the substantial population influx into the capital and other large cities, the Greek State had to appease impoverished peasants and the petty bourgeoisie, who would eventually become established as the urban population in Greece.

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[3] Georgios Leontaritis, "Το ελληνικό κράτος από το 1913 ως τη μικρασιατική καταστροφή" [The Greek State from 1913 to the Asia Minor Disaster], and "Οικονομία και κοινωνία από το 1914 ως το 1918" [Economy and society from 1914 to 1918], in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους* [History of the Greek nation], Vol. XV, Athens: Ekdotiki Athinon, 1978, pp. 15-83.

The twentieth century gave rise to certain developments in commerce itself, especially with the steady expansion of retail shops. The number of these shops gradually increased, especially in large urban centres, where employment opportunities were offered to young men and women; the development of the retail sector broadened professional opportunities for young people as shop assistants and signified the "democratization" of the job. The number of youth, regardless of gender, social background or geographical origin, engaged in this professional field increased, especially after the military campaigns that marked the first half of the twentieth century in Greece.[4] Although incomplete data do not allow us to define methodically the number of shop assistants in the first half of twentieth century, it is estimated that in 1958 their number reached 180,237 people, employed in 104,700 retail shops.[5]

The retail store constituted the space of professional apprenticeship for young people, a usually unskilled work force, who came to claim their specific social identity through some form of special training in the day or evening commercial high schools. In the course of the twentieth century, these schools attracted more young working people, in their effort to acquire both classic and vocational education and to combine working with learning opportunities. In contrast to a blue-collar worker, a white-collar employee such as a young shop assistant in Athens usually came from rural Greece at an early age in order to find an unqualified job and to pursue his or her commercial education part-time.

In this article we seek to examine education concerning the "art of commerce", a more flexible type of training in comparison with its strictly technical equivalent. This was a form of education that, in the first half of the twentieth century, was associated with a completely different approach to that of the apprenticeship guilds of the nineteenth century. While apprenticeships in the merchant houses of diaspora Greek entrepreneurs occurred only via personal recommendations in order to pursue internships and were based on practical training, tacit knowledge and personal use of European commercial manuals, commercial education in the period under examination constituted a more institutionalized process.

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[4] The archival evidence here derives from Maria Christina Chatziioannou and Maria Mavroidi (eds), *Εμπορικός Σύλλογος Αθηνών, 1902-2002. Ιστορική αναδρομή στη συλλογική συνείδηση των εμπόρων* [The Athens Traders Association, 1902-2002: A historical retrospection in the collective conscience of traders], Athens: Kerkyra, 2002.

[5] Valia Aranitou, *Το μικρό εμπόριο στη μεταπολεμική Ελλάδα. Η πολιτική μιας αμφίβολης επιβίωσης* [Small trade in post-war Greece: The policy of a dubious survival], Athens: Papazisi, 2006, pp. 70-71.

In this context, our article seeks to emphasize the ways in which a professional group that was recognized by the state through its own associations was specifically created and developed in the first half of the twentieth century and how this group envisaged creating the sole educational qualifications for its own members, those working in the field of retail.

The Shop Assistants Associations

In the second half of the nineteenth century, European governmental and non-governmental institutions (chambers of commerce, boards of trade) promoted the combination of national trade with commercial education,[6] while the latter had been a constant request from the people who worked in subordinate positions of trade. In the case of Greece, a mutual aid society was established in Athens in 1889, under the name Μετοχικό Ταμείο των εν Αθήναις Εμποροϋπαλλήλων [Equity Fund of the Athens Shop Assistants]. The main purpose of this association was to assist, benefit and protect its members in some common matters and objectives. Membership included employees of commercial stores, whose conduct was honest and honourable, as well as merchants, except for those who had conducted false bankruptcy. The Fund's revenues derived from monthly payments from its members, as well as benevolent donations from other sources. After a year of consecutive contributions, members would be eligible to request a sum in case of death, poverty or illness. The Fund's treasury was connected to the newly established (1875) Evangelismos Hospital in central Athens.[7]

The first president of the Equity Fund of the Athens Shop Assistants was Athanasios Koumanis (Tripoli, Peloponnese, 1848 – Athens, 1896), whose personal history illustrates a characteristic example of a shop assistant's life at the end of the nineteenth century. After being educated in his home town, Koumanis moved to Ermoupolis, Syros, one of the most important commercial harbours of Greece at the time. After working as a shop assistant in his uncle's merchant house, where he acquired practical training in commerce, he was then transferred to Manchester as a commercial agent. Due to his practical experience in the field, he ended up as an independent merchant in Paris, Zurich and Saxony. However, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 damaged his business network and forced him to return to Athens, where he worked in large retail stores. The knowledge,

[6] André-Pierre Nouvion, *L'institution des chambres de commerce. Pouvoirs et contrepoids*, Paris: Librairie générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1992; Claire Lemercier, *La Chambre de Commerce de Paris, 1803-1852. Un "corps consultatif" entre représentation et information économiques*, doctoral thesis, Paris: EHESS, 2001.

[7] *Ἐφημερὶς τῆς Κυβερνήσεως* [Government gazette], no. 190 (26 July 1889), pp. 883-887.

training and experience he had acquired through his work in Europe made him a fervent advocate of commercial education.[8]

In the same year (1889), a similar association was formed. The Piraeus Shop Assistants Association, under the name Η Ένωσις, envisaged improving the intellectual and moral standing of shop assistants through the establishment of a library, the organization of public lectures and the promotion of commercial education (article 1.2). Its members were shop assistants, as well as employees of the merchant, banking and manufacturing companies of Piraeus (article 3).[9]

Two years later, in 1891, the Σύλλογος Εμποροϋπαλλήλων της Αθήνας [Athens Shop Assistants Association] was formed. Regular members were confined to shop assistants, while merchants and industrialists could join only as honorary participants. The Association invited members and their families to its various functions, strictly forbidding the conduct of political discussions (article 47). Unlike the Equity Fund of the Athens Shop Assistants, the Athens Shop Assistants Association did not impose regular contributions from its members, but accepted benevolent donations, and its earnings and property were deposited at the Bank of Athens (article 39). The Association had its own premises and could finance by its own means lessons on double-entry bookkeeping, Greek and French (articles 42, 43).[10] The first president (1891-1896) of the Association was Andreas Apostolopoulos, a shop assistant who had migrated from his home town of Pyrgos, Peloponnese, to Athens, where he worked in a large retail store owned by his uncle.[11]

From the late nineteenth century, the Athens Shop Assistants Association started to collect and direct demands from its members as an organized vocational group. As was the case with other similar examples of professional associations, the first demands were connected to salaries, holidays and working conditions in general. With regard to wage demands, the group of shop assistants seems to have been part, at least in some cases, of the large group of white-collar workers, with merchants and shop owners providing (either individually or through their confederations) some form of protection to shop assistants and their associations. The Athens Shop Assistants Association sought to manage relations of a heterogeneous vocational group with the state and other

[8] Georgios Georgakopoulos, *Λεύκωμα του Συλλόγου Εμποροϋπαλλήλων Αθηνών* [Album of the Athens Shop Assistants Association], Athens: Estia, 1909, pp. 29-31.

[9] *Ἐφημερὶς τῆς Κυβερνήσεως* [Government gazette], no. 184 (19 July 1889), pp. 867-870.

[10] *Ἐφημερὶς τῆς Κυβερνήσεως* [Government gazette], no. 87 (18 March 1892), pp. 303-306.

[11] Georgakopoulos, *Λεύκωμα*, pp. 36-37.

institutionalized professional associations, in an effort to configure the public identity of its members through its intercessory role.[12]

These rather premature and undeveloped efforts on the part of the shop assistants to organize their working affairs and promote their education were formalized in 1914 with the issue by the government of the law on associations.[13] This turning point occurred in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, which increased enormously the population of Greece and can thus be seen in the context of the state's effort to normalize and regulate the organization of working associations *per se*, as well as their involvement in matters of education.

Along these lines, it was specified that trade associations could establish vocational schools or workshop apprenticeships with annual financial aid from the ministry of finance (article 21). Thus, the evening preparatory commercial school – in the form of training courses – that was run by the Athens Shop Assistants Association asked for financial support for the appointment of teachers, in an effort to continue offering the courses provided: Greek language, mathematics, geography, commercial courses and French. Accordingly, the ministry of finance undertook some of the school's funding, and the state recognized it as equivalent to the public vocational schools. This development may be regarded as a step towards the Association's connection to the state under the first organized labour law, a tie that would furthermore ensure economic survival, recognition and state control.[14]

Commercial Education and the State

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, European discussions about commercial education were ample and posed questions regarding moral, liberal and practical education.[15] Originally, merchants lived above their shops

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[12] The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (hereafter ELIA), Athens: Shop assistants folder.

[13] S. Moudopoulos, "Ο νόμος 281/1914 για τα επαγγελματικά σωματεία και η επίδραση του στην εξέλιξη του συνδικαλιστικού κινήματος" [The law 281/1914 for the professional associations and the effect of the evolution of the trade union movement], in G. Mavrogoradtos and C. Hatziiossif (eds), *Βενιζελισμός και αστικός εκσυγχρονισμός* [Venizelism and civic modernization], Heraklion: Crete University Press, 1988, pp. 225-253.

[14] *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* [Government gazette], no. 171 (25 June 1914), pp. 893-899.

[15] For earlier periods, see Jochen Hoock, "L'enseignement commercial anglais au XVIIIe siècle", and Pierre Jeannin, "Distinction des compétences et niveaux de qualification. Les savoirs négociants dans l'Europe moderne", in Franco Angiolini and Daniel Roche (eds), *Cultures et formations négociantes dans l'Europe moderne*, Paris: EHESS, 1995, pp. 159-173, pp. 363-397.

or warehouses, and their clerks and other employees were considered part of their family in terms of paternal authority. Victorian and Edwardian England presented a multifaceted social stratification – which included shop assistants – based on new economic conditions and the new cultural values adopted by the petty bourgeoisie, in other cases described as the middle classes. The master-merchant was not only the guardian of their morals and behaviour, but also their daily instructor, while state or private education was a significant criterion towards the new social stratification. Geoffrey Crossick's work on social origins and aspirations of shop assistants is pivotal, exemplifying, amongst other factors, the interrelationship between enterprise and family life.[16]

In France, commercial colleges were frequently endorsed by the chambers of commerce and municipal authorities.[17] The École Spéciale de Commerce operated under the control of the ministry of agriculture and commerce and was admittedly successful in raising the standards of commercial education. A similar school of high reputation, known as the Institut Supérieur de Commerce, operated in Antwerp, where students were instructed in bookkeeping, trade forms, exchanges, the civil code, political economy, commercial history and geography, as well as the languages of commercial nations.

Distinguished commercial schools existed in Austria. Among the most important was the Handelsakademie of Vienna, founded in 1857. The full two-year course of instruction comprised general arithmetic, physical geography, natural history, zoology, mineralogy, botany, physiology, calligraphy, primary bookkeeping and the languages of adjacent countries during the first year. In the second year, and with a fair knowledge of these subjects, the student was introduced to complex bookkeeping, the more intricate branches of commercial arithmetic, foreign exchanges, commercial geography, international and commercial relations, political economy, counting-room practice, commercial

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[16] Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914*, London: Croom Helm, 1977; Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth-century Europe*, London: Methuen, 1984; *id*., *The Petite Bourgeoisie in Europe, 1780-1914: Enterprise, Family and Independence*, London: Routledge, 1995. For a later negotiation of Crossick's arguments, see Christopher P. Hosgood, "'Mercantile Monasteries': Shops, Shop Assistants and Shop Life in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain", *Journal of British Studies* 38/3 (1999), pp. 322-352.

[17] Philippe Maffre, *Les origines de l'enseignement commercial supérieur en France au XIXe siècle*, doctoral thesis, Paris: Université Paris I, 1983; Jean-Pierre Nioche, "Enseigner les affaires par 'des opérations de commerce simulées'", *Entreprises et Histoire*, special issue: "Former des gestionnaires", nos 14-15 (1997), pp. 137-140.

technology and a practical study of commercial values. Therefore, it seems that the educational goal of that time was to combine experience with specialization.[18]

Commercial evening schools in England were mainly run by the school boards, while the importance of their existence was fervently discussed at the time. Courses were either free (as in London) or at nominal fees. During the school year 1899-1900, there were 12 commercial evening schools. Bookkeeping, shorthand and French were also taught in a large number of the 350 ordinary evening schools in London.[19]

In Germany, there were about 200 commercial schools, with the oldest having been established at Leipzig in 1831. Unlike the English case, the German commercial schools were entirely independent of their secondary equivalents. A relevant discussion emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, connecting the success of national trade with commercial education. In this context, the main question was whether the commercial success of the German nation was the outcome of commercial education, or whether the latter was the result of already existing commercial development. In other words, was commercial and trade development the driving force that made the chambers of commerce realize the value of commercial education?[20]

In the case of Greece, legislation concerning the organization of professional associations, the development of education and public life in general was enacted in the early twentieth century. With three educational reforms (1913, 1917 and 1929), the ministry of education introduced a series of reform bills that involved almost every stage of education: elementary school, the so-called civic school (which was inferior to high school and could not lead to higher education) and high school. The reforms in question envisaged marking the shift from classical and theoretical education to a more practical one, with emphasis being given, among others, to technical and vocational training.[21] This change had commenced timidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and had been

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[18] James Hodges, "Commercial Education", *The North American Review* 144/366 (1887), pp. 462-470.

[19] Albert Heinig, "Commercial Education in Germany and in England", *The School Review* 10/2 (1902), pp. 124-137.

[20] James Bonar, "German Clerks and Shop Assistants", *The Economic Journal* 3/10 (1893), pp. 319-324.

[21] Anna Fragkoudaki, *Εκπαιδευτική μεταρρύθμιση και φιλελεύθεροι διανοούμενοι. Άγονοι αγώνες και ιδεολογικά αδιέξοδα στο μεσοπόλεμο* [Educational reform and liberal intellectuals: Unproductive struggles and ideological deadlocks in the interwar period], Athens: Kedros, 2004, pp. 27-67.

a constant demand of various bourgeois Greek politicians and entrepreneurs.[22] However, in the first half of the twentieth century, the demands for technical and vocational training came about as a result of the real economic and social developments that emerged after consecutive war operations and territorial rearrangements: rural migration, social mobility and the transformation of the rural population into the petty bourgeoisie in large urban centres.

As we have already pointed out, from the late nineteenth century commercial education had been a constant pursuit of charitable organizations and professional associations, in an effort to approach Western standards. The law concerning the establishment of commercial schools was enacted in 1903.[23] Within less than five years, in 1907, there were 6 public commercial schools with 315 students, accounting for 1% of the total student population. In 1915-1916 there were 7 schools with 364 students, while in 1920-1921 their number was increased to 16 with 2392 students, accounting for 2% of the total student population. If we add private commercial schools, the percentage would probably be doubled.[24] Although the percentage in question was low compared to general education, one could question the sufficiency of the sources employed, since according to our data young shop assistants often did not complete their studies. What we seek to emphasize here, however, is the introduction of some new form of social networking and sociability. On the same grounds, we mean to highlight the public interaction provided by the collective organization of the commercial world with the formation of the Athens Shop Assistants Association and the Athens Traders Association (1902), as well as the constant promotion of commercial education by them.

However, state interest and intervention in commercial education can be specifically examined after the decree of 1903, which envisaged introducing this form of training and regulating vocational education in Greece. In 1919, the minister of finance requested from the Athens Shop Assistants Association

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[22] See the example of the Sivitanidios School, founded through a private bequest in the interwar period: Aliki Vaxevanoglou, *Σιβιτανίδειος Σχολή Τεχνών και Επαγγελμάτων. Από την ίδρυση στην καθιέρωση* [Sivitanidios School of Arts and Professions: From foundation to recognition], Athens: Sivitanidios School, 2005.

[23] *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* [Government gazette], no. 169 (23 July 1903), pp. 543-544.

[24] Constantinos Tsoukalas, *Εξάρτηση και αναπαραγωγή. Ο κοινωνικός ρόλος των εκπαιδευτικών μηχανισμών στην Ελλάδα (1830-1922)* [Dependence and reproduction: The social role of educational mechanisms in Greece (1830-1922)], Athens: Themelio, 1992; Stratis Bournazos, "Η εκπαίδευση στο ελληνικό κράτος" [Education in the Greek State], in C. Hatziiossif (ed.), *Ιστορία της Ελλάδας του 20ού αιώνα. Οι απαρχές, 1900-1922* [History of Greece in the twentieth century: The beginnings, 1900-1922], Athens: Vivliorama, 1999, p. 213.

an analytical report on the lessons provided in the already existing commercial schools, and the number, names and qualifications of teachers, as well as their wages. In the same year, students in commercial schools demanded from the board of the Athens Shop Assistants Association to reduce the teaching of the Greek language in favour of commercial subjects, highlighting that the variety of lessons provided did not abide by a strict commercial orientation. A few months later, the minister of finance decided to prolong the school year for commercial schools, because of insufficient operation due to war conditions.[25] The major problem for shop assistants, as it was for every young soldier in the period of World War I, was the payment of wages for those mobilized in warfare.

The examination of commercial education during World War I and its aftermath coincides with the peculiarities of Greek history in the period under scrutiny and the consequences of the profound political controversy between the two rival political groups of Venizelists and anti-Venizelists. With the former pressing towards a more practical and vocational form of education, one connected with the economic needs of the state and the labour market, the latter group was stuck in a bookish style of education, based on the teaching of Ancient Greek and isolated from the actual needs of the economy and society.[26]

Although the stance of the Athens Shop Assistants Association on these issues is of some importance, it cannot be sufficiently argued and documented at this point; and although we have reasons to believe that shop assistants *per se* and their association were closer to anti-Venizelist views, insufficient data do not allow us to support this view firmly. In this context, may we include the Athens Shop Assistants Association initiative to support evening commercial education in a modernizing trend, especially after 1914? Did state initiatives in the field meet the expectations of the Association? Did this "practical education" reinforce labour appeals?

By the 1920s state intervention was complete, a new welfare state was emerging in Greece, and various professional, semi-professional and workers' groups contested their professional identities and their values in a new social mosaic. This mosaic was enriched with newcomers of internal and external migrations; by and large, fresh shop assistants were among them.

Within some 35 years, that is, from 1903 to 1937, 31 commercial schools had been established in Greece. The majority of these (23) were state-financed schools or institutions, and the minority were privately funded. In addition, there were

[25] ELIA: Shop assistants folder.

[26] For the Venizelists' educational policies, see Alexis Dimaras, "Modernisation and Reaction in Greek Education during the Venizelos Era", in P. M. Kitromilides (ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos: The Trial of Statesmanship*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008, p. 321.

some 12 schools run and funded by commercial associations or by the chambers of commerce. As for attendance, it is estimated that 5300 students were enrolled in all these schools by 1931. Of this total number, only 17% were girls, mostly attending state-funded schools, while privately funded schools attracted almost exclusively boys. The majority of the latter combined commercial education with employment as shop assistants or apprentices.[27]

Commercial education at university level began with the formation in 1920 of the Athens School of Commercial Studies (law 2191/18-6-1920). Commercial studies thus became the first field of vocational education that could lead to higher education and a university degree. The School was based on the standards of its corresponding faculty at the Université de Lausanne. In the beginning it was housed in the premises of the Industrial and Trade Academy, which had been founded in 1894 by the chemist O. Roussopoulos and the physicist I. Gerakis as a secondary technical school, aiming to provide practical education along with some elements of theoretical knowledge. In 1939 the renamed Higher Commercial and Economic Institution (Α.Σ.Ο.Ε.Ε.) acquired full academic recognition; it was supported financially by the state and became the superior school of academic learning in the field of commerce.[28]

With the end of the Civil War in 1949, the Greek State attempted to reform education, primarily at the elementary and secondary levels. Social and economic integration of those who had fled from rural Greece to the capital and other large urban centres was the underlying objective, since the re-establishment of the pre-war educational organization and curriculum was not sufficient to meet new needs. Within a decade, that is, from the 1950s to the 1960s, the student population had increased by 80%, while students in practical sciences increased more than three times. In this context, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Greece sponsored a study of the technical and scientific needs of the country, in order to help devise a plan for economic development in the 1960s. The study in question was conducted by a group of experts and was completed in August 1962. It was based on the assumption that, in planning economic development, a thorough educational programme was urgently needed. It was pointed out that the economic backwardness of the country was directly related to the low level of professional education of the nation's labour force. That was the first post-war state attempt to organize specifically the national educational system according to economic developmental needs.

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[27] S. I. Glavas, *Η τεχνική και επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση στην Ελλάδα* [Technical and vocational training in Greece], Athens: Society for the Distribution of Useful Books, 2002, pp. 215-216.

[28] See the university website: http://www.aueb.gr/pages/about/history.php.

Although in previous periods similar state concerns had led to scattered attempts to reform the educational system, this was the first effort to connect education and training with accurate developmental needs in a European context.[29]

The Commercial School of Athens

As an illustrative example of the difficulty of combining the long working hours of a shop assistant with studying, we considered the data from the Commercial School of Athens, a three-year course in commercial studies. Of the 77 students enrolled in the school year 1905-1906, 8 abstained from courses altogether, 11 were rejected, and 1 abstained from the exams, while 14 were re-examined. Of those promoted to the next grade, 34 graduated with a grade of "good" and 8 with "very good". Thus, almost half of the student population in the school in question was either withdrawn or referred, while from those promoted less than 10% achieved a very good grade, and nobody was awarded a distinction. The subjects with the highest failure rate were commercial studies and foreign languages (English, French and German), as well as mathematics. Apart from those, courses included history, geography, natural history, gymnastics, religious studies (replaced with science of commerce in the third grade) and calligraphy (replaced with shorthand writing in the third grade).[30]

The students were the progeny of people from all professional classes: doctors, priests and white-collar employees, peasants and farmers, as well as teachers. The profession of the father that seems to stand out (but did not dominate in absolute terms) was that of merchant. If we add that of the grocer-retailer, it seems that the offspring of people engaged in trade were 17 out of 77, that is, 22%. The second most common profession was white-collar employee, and the

[29] Stephen C. Margaritis, "Higher Education in Greece", *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Education* 10/3 (1964), pp. 297-311. For a post-war economist's view, see X. Zolotas, *Economic Development and Technical Education*, Athens: Bank of Greece, 1960, pp. 24-28. For post-war educational reform in Greece, see N. Dendrinou-Antonakaki, *Η εκπαιδευτική μεταρρύθμιση του 1959* [The educational reform of 1959], Athens 1960; K. Krimpas, "Ανώτατη παιδεία και έρευνα, 1949-1974" [Higher education and research, 1949-1974], and Alexis Dimaras, "Σχολική εκπαίδευση" [School education], in *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού* [History of modern Hellenism], Vol. IX, Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2003, pp. 155-156, 174-176.

[30] For an outline of vocational education in Greece, see Glavas, *Η τεχνική και επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση στην Ελλάδα*. All archival material here derives from ELIA: Commercial School of Athens, school certificates, 1905-1906.

third was teacher. Last, but not least, rather few seem to have been the offspring of blue-collar workers.[31]

The relation between the age of admission to the school and the profession of the father (as the main breadwinner of the household) seems to suggest that the age of admission corresponds with the social importance of the father's profession, in other words, the younger the student, the more important and qualified the profession of the father. The youngest students were 12 and 13 years old, and their fathers were a teacher and a doctor, respectively. As for the opposite side of the age/profession scale, the oldest students were 19 and 22, with their fathers' professions mentioned as blue-collar worker and grocer-retailer.[32]

The conclusion concerning the relationship between school performance and the profession of the father is quite similar. In this context, the offspring of fathers with professions of higher social importance achieved better results at school, with sons of teachers, priests, a bailiff and a merchant achieving the only "very good" grades during the 1905-1906 school year.[33]

Conclusion

Our essay sought to give an outline of commercial education in twentieth-century Greece. In the period under analysis, the Greek State implemented some major reforms of vocational training, especially in the field of commerce. These reforms coincided with the end of the military operations that accounted for the major demographic and social changes in the country: the Balkan Wars, the Asia Minor Campaign, World War II occupation and resistance and the Civil War.

Especially after the end of the Asia Minor Campaign and the arrival of more than 1,000,000 refugees in the country – in a total population of approximately 5,000,000 – the Greek State had to take measures for the integration of the refugees, especially considering that half of them settled in the countryside. The arrival of this population mobilized the Greek State to adopt measures regarding their vocational education, aiming at securing job prospects and meeting the demands for relatively skilled jobs. In almost every case, trade constituted the field that absorbed many social shocks, since it comprised some form of flexible employment for internal migrants, peasants and refugees. Even more so, the nature and content of commercial training, as opposed to a technical one, can be attributed with a different collectiveness; it offered a co-educational environment, as it was directed to both boys and girls, and was open to social

[31] *Ibid*.
[32] *Ibid*.
[33] *Ibid*.

mobility, since its curriculum could serve a shop assistant, an independent trader and, in rare cases, a future self-made businessman.

The history of vocational education in Athens pertains to the above issues and attempts to define a new social and professional collectiveness, which would gradually appear through the emergence of the professional group of shop assistants. The social conditions for the development of vocational education in the first half of the twentieth century can be summarized as follows: a) both the interwar and post-war economic recovery of Greece was predicated on rural outflow and internal migration of unskilled young people to Athens, the metropolitan centre of the country; b) the strengthening of the middle strata in Athens was characterized by variations within these layers of society, which were also expressed by their specific choice of education; c) the growth of consumer power of the people in Athens activated and developed the retail sector, with a consequent demand for auxiliary staff; and d) the emergence of commercial education was generally caused by the above factors in order to meet job demands for skilled work. With a curriculum focused on more practical and "to the point" job skills, commercial schools prepared students for white-collar or skilled blue-collar work.

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