



OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF DAY GENERAL LYCEUM STUDENTS IN GREECE AT A TIME OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

Georgia Spiliopoulou¹,
Gerasimos Koustourakis¹ⁱ,
Anna Asimaki²,
Pandelis Kiprianos¹

¹Department of Educational Sciences
and Early Childhood Education,
University of Patras, Greece

²Department of Primary Education,
University of Patras, Greece

Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the differences in the occupational expectations of Day General Lyceum students in Greece according to their social origin. Furthermore, their criteria for choosing a profession and the factors which influence their occupational expectations are explored. The research sample consists of Day General Lyceum students in Greece who attended the 2nd grade of Lyceum during the school year 2017-2018, and the research data were collected with the use of the semi-structured interview. The results of this study showed that students tend to have high occupational expectations, regardless of the volume of their 'institutionalized' cultural capital and the socio-economic status of their family of origin. Moreover, the economic crisis that Greece is facing today, and which influences the family and the students' social life, has also had a significant impact on the formation of their occupational expectations, regardless of their socio-economic origin.

Keywords: occupational expectations, students, economic crisis, Greece

1. Introduction

The states of the European South, and especially Greece, have suffered a great blow from the current economic crisis. Extreme austerity policies promoted by European and transnational economic and political forces have contributed, on the one hand, to a decline in living standards and to the impoverishment of the majority of the population and, on the other hand, to the widening of the financial gap between the North and the

ⁱ Corresponding Author: Gerasimos Koustourakis, Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras, 265.04 Rio Patras, Greece, email: koustourakis@upatras.gr

South, so much so in fact, there is now talk within the European Union of a 'two-speed' Europe; namely a rich and politically and economically dominant North, and a poor and politically and economically suppressed South (Kousis, 2013, p. 37; Matthijs, 2014, pp. 105, 107; Zambeta, 2014, pp. 1, 4; Zamora-Kapoor & Coller, 2014).

The growing recession in the economies of the southern countries - with the Greek economy going through the deepest and most prolonged recession - brings the shrinking welfare state to implement a reduction in public spending in the fields of education, health, social security and policies to combat poverty. This has led to an increase in educational, health and social inequalities, as well as the social marginalization of more and more groups of the population, creating a deep 'rift' in the social structure (Karanikolos, Mladovsky, Cylus, Thomson, Basu, Stuckler, Mackenbach, & McKee, 2013; Kyriopoulos & Tsiantou, 2010; Mpoutsiou & Sarafis, 2013, pp. 147-148; Petmesidou & Guillén, 2015; Zambeta, 2014). Moreover, the economic crisis has also hit the employment sector, leading to the introduction of flexible forms of employment and creating a fluid working landscape in the countries of the European South. Unemployment, especially in Greece and Spain, is explosive. As a result, more and more highly educated young people, mainly from Greece, Spain and Portugal, move from the periphery to the core of the Eurozone, looking for a job with better prospects and higher salaries. This 'brain drain' towards the European North is one of the strongest blows for the southern countries at a time when innovation and creativity through the use of outstanding scientific staff is crucial for these countries' financial recovery (Bartolini, Gropas, & Triandafyllidou, 2017; Choudhry, Marelli, & Signorelli, 2012; Ifanti, Argyriou, Kalofonou, & Kalofonos, 2014; Matthijs, 2014, p. 108; Ortega & Peñalosa, 2012; Zamora-Kapoor & Coller, 2014).

Education in Greece has also been deeply affected by the current economic crisis. This can be seen in the reduction in public spending on education and the abolition and merging of educational structures involving both school structures and administrative education services. Thus, phenomena such as school dropout, are expected to increase in the coming years (Fotopoulos, 2014). Indeed, the 'NEETs' in Greek society, an extension of school dropout, namely young people aged 15-24 who are not in education, employment or training, is a contemporary phenomenon of social pathogeny (Fotopoulos, 2014, p. 320; Papadakis, Kyridis, & Papargyris, 2015, pp. 45, 47).

From the study of recent scientific literature we can conclude that the issue of the educational and occupational expectations of students and of parents for their children in relation to socio-economic factors has garnered the interest of a large number of scientists in their papers (see: Koo, 2012; Rätty, 2006; Rätty, Leinonen, & Snellman, 2002). However, it would be interesting from a research point of view to approach this phenomenon from the perspective of the economic crisis in the countries experiencing it.

In Greece today, Lyceum students in the 2nd decade of the 21st century are living in a fluid and changing socio-economic and political environment and are called upon to make important decisions about their occupational future. The purpose of this

work is to investigate the possible existence of differentiations in the occupational expectations of the 2nd grade students of Day General Lyceums in Greece according to their social origin, as well as their criteria for choosing a profession and the factors that influence their occupational expectations.

The following section presents the theoretical concepts used in this research paper. This is followed by the research questions - methodology, as well as the results and discussion. This work closes with the conclusions summarizing the most important research findings.

2. Theoretical notes

In this paper, we will use the concepts of 'habitus', 'class habitus', 'institutionalized cultural capital', 'economic capital' and 'field' from the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, to which we will briefly refer.

According to Bourdieu (1986, 1994a), cultural capital can exist in three states: the engendered state - habitus (durable dispositions, the way the social subject thinks and acts), the objectified state (cultural goods which are visible and transferable to the inheritors), and the institutionalized state of educational credentials; namely the educational titles guaranteed by educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248; Bourdieu, 1994a, pp. 77-84).

Bourdieu (1977, p. 86) defines habitus as 'a subjective system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class.' An individual's habitus is influenced by external 'conditions of existence', including the family and the social class, '*which in turn become the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience*' (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 90; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 78). Thus, the social subject's habitus shapes his expectations and his orientations towards the future (Naidoo, 2009, p. 264).

Bourdieu also points out the link between habitus and the individual's social class. The class habitus is the common denominator in the different practices of an individual act, as well as the 'common matrix' of the practices of those who have lived in the same or similar conditions of being within the social field (Accardo, 1991, pp. 95-99; Bourdieu, 2006, p. 99).

The family is a principle that is inherent in individuals (embodying the collective element) and at the same time is transcendent to them in the form of objectivity within the social structure. It constitutes one of the main 'places' of accumulation of the various forms of capital and their transfer from generation to generation. It assures its unity via transfer so that the different forms of capital can penetrate the next generation (Bourdieu, 1994b, pp. 138-139, 143).

Bourdieu argues that all types of capital, including cultural, social and symbolic capital, are based on economic capital (Devine, 2009, p. 522). Economic capital is the basis of all forms of capital used for profit and has a direct link to the (re)production of hierarchies and social inequalities (Horne, Lingard, Weiner, & Forbes, 2011, p. 865). It is

a source 'directly convertible to money' which is institutionalized in the form of property rights (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

Each field (such as the social field and the field of education) is a structured space of social positions held by individuals (Accardo, 1991, p. 14; Bourdieu, 1993, 1998). The field is defined as 'a network of objective relationships between positions' (Swingewood, 1998, p. 92) and is a relatively autonomous space, a microcosm, which structures the behavior of social subjects without defining their behavior. Also, the structures of the field are undergoing constant changes (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 24; Eichholz, Assche, Oberkircher, & Hornidge, 2013, p. 872). In particular, the field constitutes a space of conflict and competition within which the agents-'players' are reckoning by using the different forms of capital they possess, seeking to maintain and/or transform the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Thomson, 2008). The positions of the subjects within each social field depend on the size and the structure of the forms of capital they possess, as well as the power relations developed by the interaction between them (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 45; Bourdieu, 2005, p. 34).

According to the above theoretical notes, we could argue that the formation of the occupational expectations of the students, who participated in this research, tends to be defined by the differentiated position of their family in the social field and their parents' differentiated 'institutionalized' cultural capital.

3. Research questions - Methodology

In this paper, we attempt to answer the following research questions:

- What are the differences in the occupational expectations of the Day General Lyceum students in Greece who participated in the research, according to their social class?
- What are the criteria for choosing an occupation and the factors that affect the occupational expectations of the students in the sample?

This study, which is part of wider ongoing research, took place during the 2017-2018 school year, lasted from January to May 2018, and was conducted using semi-structured interviews. It is noted that students' participation in the research was based on the signed consent of their parents according to the ethical principles in the research process (Creswell, 2011).

A schedule of semi-structured interview questions was created and used for the purpose of this research, which was pilot tested with two 2nd grade students of a Day General Lyceum who were then excluded from the research sample. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the use of 'snowball sampling', which belongs to the types of 'non-probability sampling' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008; Robson, 2007), with a sample of 20 second grade Greek students (12 girls and 8 boys) of Day General Lyceums in the Region of Western Greece. We chose to focus on 2nd grade General Lyceum students because in this grade they seem to settle on their choices since they have to select a particular study direction that greatly defines their educational

future. During the research process, the semi-structured interviews were tape recorded with the students' permission (Bell, 1999; Robson, 2007).

Then, we transcribed the semi-structured interviews and used the qualitative content analysis technique to analyze the research data (Bell, 1999; Iosifides, 2008; Psarrou & Zafeiropoulos, 2004).

The 'theme'; namely the smallest part of the content included in a particular category of analysis is taken as unit of analysis (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1969; Krippendorff, 2004). The various topics that emerged from the interview data were classified into one of the following categories of analysis related to the students' occupational expectations:

A. Occupation students expect to follow in the future. - Criteria for choosing a profession at a time of economic crisis in Greece.

B. Factors that affect students' occupational expectations.

In the next section, we will present and discuss the research results.

4. Results and Discussion

In Table 1 the socio-economic profile of the research subjects is presented. It should be mentioned that to assign the occupations of the students' parents to specific occupational categories, we used the coding system of OPCS 1990 Standard Occupational Classification (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, 1990) which is internationally accepted and is used in research in the field of social sciences (see: Koustourakis & Asimaki, 2011; Wakeling, 2005).

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of the research subjects

Research subjects	Sex	Educational level of father	Occupation of father	Educational level of mother	Occupation of mother
I.1	Male	University graduate	Administrative scientific staff in the public or private sector	University graduate	Administrative scientific staff in the public or private sector
I.2	Female	Lyceum graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector	Lyceum graduate	Housewife
I.3	Male	Postgraduate diploma holder	Health care	University degree	Teacher
I.4	Female	Post-secondary education graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector	Lyceum graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector
I.5	Male	Postgraduate diploma holder	Higher scientific occupation	Technological Educational Institute graduate	Health care
I.6	Female	University	Teacher	University	Teacher

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		graduate		graduate	
I.7	Female	University graduate	Security corps	University graduate	Teacher
I.8	Female	Lyceum graduate	Farmer	University graduate	Teacher
I.9	Female	University graduate	Managerial position in the service sector	Post-secondary education graduate	Managerial position in the service sector
I.10	Male	Gymnasium graduate	Farmer	Lyceum graduate	Housewife
I.11	Male	Technological Educational Institute graduate	Businessman	Lyceum graduate	Businesswoman
I.12	Male	University graduate	Businessman	University graduate	Businesswoman
I.13	Female	Lyceum graduate	Administrative scientific staff in the public or private sector	University graduate	Teacher
I.14	Female	Technological Educational Institute graduate	Technician	Lyceum graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector
I.15	Female	Primary school graduate	Businessman	Lyceum graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector
I.16	Female	Lyceum graduate	Technician	Lyceum graduate	Housewife
I.17	Female	Gymnasium graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector	Gymnasium graduate	Housewife
I.18	Male	University graduate	Administrative scientific staff in the public or private sector	University graduate	Teacher
I.19	Female	Lyceum graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector	Lyceum graduate	Clerical-administrative staff in the public or private sector
I.20	Male	Primary school graduate	Businessman	Lyceum graduate	Businesswoman

The study of the data in Table 1 shows that one in two of the parents of the students in the sample have strong 'institutionalized' cultural capital which could be a source for the accumulation of a great volume of 'embodied' cultural capital in their children, thus contributing to the formation of high expectations concerning their occupational future

(Bourdieu, 1977, 1979, 1986, 1994a). More specifically, in terms of the education of the students' parents, it is noted that:

a) Ten fathers possessed strong 'institutionalized' cultural capital, as eight of them were tertiary education graduates (Technological Educational Institutes, Universities), and two of them were postgraduate diploma holders. One father was a post-secondary education graduate, five were lyceum graduates, two were gymnasium graduates and two were primary school graduates.

b) Nine mothers possessed strong 'institutionalized' cultural capital, as they were tertiary education graduates (Technological Educational Institutes, Universities). One mother was a post-secondary education graduate, nine were lyceum graduates and one was a gymnasium graduate.

Then, regarding the occupations of the students' parents, the following findings emerged:

a) In terms of the occupations of the students' fathers, the research findings showed that: one father held a managerial position in the service sector, one held a position in the health care sector (as a doctor), one held a higher scientific position, four had their own business, one was a teacher, three held administrative scientific positions in the public or private sector, four held clerical-administrative positions in the public or private sector, one held a position in the security corps, two were technicians and two fathers were farmers.

b) Concerning the occupations of the students' mothers, it emerged that: one mother held a managerial position in the service sector, three had their own business, six were teachers, one held an administrative scientific position in the public or private sector, four held clerical-administrative positions in the public or private sector, one held a position in the health care sector (as a nurse) and four mothers were housewives.

Based on Pyrgiotakis' classification system (2009), which seems to be adapted to the particularities of the social stratification that exists in Greece, we proceeded to classify the families of the 20 students in the sample, taking into account the educational level and the occupation of their parents, in the following social categories:

- Upper middle class¹ [occupations of parents: professionals in managerial positions in the service sector, businessmen, professionals with high income and a higher level of education (doctors and lawyers)]: There are 12 students in this category (60%).
- Intermediate middle class [occupations of parents: administrative scientific staff in the public and private sector (bank employees)]: There are 2 students in this category (10%).
- Lower middle class² (occupations of parents: teachers, clerical-administrative staff in the public and private sector, nursing staff, skilled craftsmen): There are 4 students in this category (20%).
- Working class and rural social strata: There are 2 students in this category (10%).

The findings of the qualitative content analysis of the students' interview data revealed the following for each of the two categories of analysis.

A. Occupation students expect to follow in the future. - Criteria for choosing a profession at a time of economic crisis in Greece

All the students who participated in the research had high expectations for their occupational future regardless of the volume of their parents' 'institutionalized' cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1994a) and the socio-economic status of their family. In particular, the students in the sample expect to follow higher scientific occupations (such as: lawyer, psychologist - 7 students, 35%), health care occupations (such as: doctor, biologist - 4 students, 20%), occupations in the category of administrative scientific staff in the public or private sector (such as: accountant, financial investor - 4 students, 20%) and educational occupations (such as: gymnast, teacher of German literature - 3 students, 15%). There is a limited number of students in the sample (2 students, 10%), who come from the lower middle class, as well as from the rural social strata, expressing the expectation of becoming officers in the army and the air force.

Moreover, the research findings showed that a proportion of upper middle class students (3 subjects, 15%) expect to be employed in high status occupations, such as doctor and lawyer, in order to use the 'institutionalized' cultural capital they will acquire in the form of university degrees as a means of reproducing their social advantages and maintaining their privileged position in the social field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1994a; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). In addition, the expectation of a proportion of lower middle class students to enter 'la grande porte des Grandes Écoles' (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 188) and then to find employment in high status occupations (2 subjects, 10%) suggests that the structures of the habitus they possess evolve (Accardo, 1991) in relation to their changing position in the social field (Laberge, 1995). Therefore, these students tend to develop evolving ways of thought and action, depicted in 'reversible' occupational expectations and choices in relation to their socio-economic origin (Accardo, 1991; Maton, 2008; Swingewood, 1998).

The criteria according to which the students in the sample choose a profession are the following: (i) stable job; (ii) financial comfort; (iii) better quality of life; (iv) career prospects; and (v) to offer something to society. From the analysis of the research material, it seems that the criteria most students in the sample employ to choose a profession, regardless of the socio-economic status of their families, tend to be shaped by the economic crisis in the social and occupational field in Greece.

The following comment from a lower middle class student, who expects to become a psychologist in the future, is characteristic:

"People nowadays [at a time of economic crisis] have many problems and need to talk to a psychologist... I want to offer my help to my fellow men... This occupation can offer me money so as to be able to have a good quality of life... If I do not find a job in Greece, I will go abroad... There [abroad] the profession of psychology is in great demand!" (I.4)

The statement of an upper middle class student, who expects to become a doctor, is also characteristic:

"I want to offer my help to my fellow men... I am interested in having a stable job. Financial comfort also plays a role in meeting the everyday needs of life... This occupation offers many different outlets and prospects for development... i.e. in the field of research. However, if I cannot find a job in Greece because of the current economic crisis, I will seek my fortune abroad..." (I.9)

According to the two interview extracts above, the social phenomenon of 'brain drain' in today's Greece of the economic crisis emerges. Thus, students in the sample, regardless of their social background, are aware of the possibility of looking for opportunities and job prospects abroad due to the high unemployment rates and thus the job insecurity that exists in contemporary Greek society (Bartolini et al., 2017; Ifanti et al., 2014; Panagiotopoulou, 2013).

B. Factors that affect students' occupational expectations

The factor that tends to have a significant impact on the formation of the system of occupational expectations in the case of fifteen students (75%), regardless of their socio-economic origin, is the economic crisis in Greece.

In particular, a number of students (4 subjects, 20%), from the lower middle class, as well as the working class and the rural social strata, whose families have experienced, according to their statements, the consequences of economic crisis on their daily lives, mention that the economic crisis has had a decisive impact on the formation of expectations concerning their occupational future.

The following extract from an interview with a lower middle class student, who expects to become a biologist in the future, is indicative:

"The economic crisis has greatly influenced me in wanting to become a biologist... It has affected the everyday life of my family, our living conditions. Many professions now have limited outlets and/or no way out. That's why I am thinking of entering this profession because I think I will have more occupational opportunities, i.e. in the field of research..." (I.14)

Then, another portion of students (11 subjects, 55%), from the upper middle class and the intermediate middle class, talked about the impact of the economic crisis on their occupational expectations, taking into account the phenomena of poverty and unemployment that plague a large number of Greeks (Coniavitis, 2013; Kokosalakis, 2013). The following interview extract with an upper middle class student is characteristic:

“The economic crisis has greatly influenced me in thinking of following the profession of the accountant or the economist. I think that these professions offer job opportunities if we take into account that nowadays many professions in Greece do not offer any job. I see how many people are unemployed and that’s what makes me worry about the working conditions in our country... (I.12)

Students in the sample, regardless of their socio-economic background, also talk about a number of other factors - apart from the economic crisis - that tend to affect their expectations concerning their occupational future. These factors are: parents, relatives, friends/peers and the place of residence.

More specifically, the influence of parents on shaping the occupational expectations of students is found in eight students (40%). It therefore appears that the students’ immediate family environment that constitutes ‘the main “place” of accumulation of different forms of capital and their transfer to the next generation’ (Bourdieu, 1994b, p. 143) tends to influence the formation of their occupational expectations. A lower middle class student, whose parents were teachers, mentions:

“My parents have greatly influenced me... They believe that the medical profession will offer me many opportunities to grow... They urge me to concentrate on my studies since medical school demands high entry grades... (I.6)

From the above interview extract, a trend towards education emerges in the particular Greek family that is oriented and consequently orients the child towards higher education options (Tsoukalas, 1977, 1987). It also appears that the parents of this student, who, however, possess strong ‘institutionalized’ cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1994a) - since they are university graduates - emphasize their daughter’s career prospects, which presupposes ‘investing’ in education. This student is therefore called upon to compete in the educational field in order to acquire the educational resources required to ensure access in the most advantageous way to the ‘game’ played in the field of medical school (Bourdieu, 1993, 2007; Koustourakis & Asimaki, 2011; Swingewood, 1998; Thomson, 2008).

Furthermore, three students in the sample (15%) refer to the influence of their family environment on their career decision-making. Indicatively, an intermediate middle class student states:

“Some relatives who hold the position of financial investor have influenced me a lot. They have talked to me in detail about what it involves, the pros and cons, and they have helped me to make this decision... (I.18)

The research findings show that friends/peers and strong social ties that develop between them affect the decisions regarding the children’s educational future (Brooks,

2003; Mullen, 2009). In this research, there is one case of a lower middle class student who states that her friends have had a great impact on her career decision-making:

“My friends have greatly influenced me! They say to me: ‘Becoming a psychologist suits you! You will help people with their problems...’ (I.4)

The place of residence was reported as an influencing factor in the case of one student from the lower middle class, who expects to become an archaeologist in the future:

“The place where I live plays a role for the profession of archeology I expect to pursue... I think my place of residence offers a lot of employment opportunities since archaeological excavations are being carried out... (I.15)

Five students in the sample (25%), regardless of the socio-economic status of their family of origin, claim that they were unaffected by any decision-making factor. Indeed, they talk about a ‘purely personal decision concerning the choice of profession’. This finding is in line with the findings of Dimaki, Kaminioti, Kostaki, Psarakis & Tsourti (2005), conducted with high school students from urban areas in Greece, which showed that 41% of the students, who participated in the research, stated that the choice of profession was their personal choice.

5. Conclusions

According to what we have examined, we arrive at the following conclusions:

The sum total of students, regardless of the volume of their parents’ ‘institutionalized’ cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 1994a) and the socio-economic status of their family, tend to have high occupational expectations. In particular, their expectations are oriented towards higher scientific occupations, health care occupations, occupations in the category of administrative scientific staff in the public or private sector and educational occupations. These are categories of occupations which tend to offer more job prospects in the occupational field. However, occupations related to the army and the security corps seems to attract the interest of a limited number of lower social class students. The orientation of the students towards these occupations could be linked to the provision of immediate job stability and a bonus received from the 1st year of study (Bourdieu, 1979; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

The formation of high occupational expectations in students from either a more or less privileged socio-economic environment could be linked to the reproductive and/or transformative function of their habitus, in order to maintain and/or transform their position in the social structure (Accardo, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Swingewood, 1998). The formation of the habitus connects the individual with the social element (Maton, 2008, p. 53) and from this point of view it could be argued that

the body of experiences accumulated by the students during their lifetime focuses on occupational decisions and expectations that show 'vicinities' and/or 'distances' of people belonging to the same social stratum and/or in the same family as them (Bourdieu, 1977, 1994b, 2006).

The criteria according to which the students in the sample choose a profession are: stable job, financial comfort, better quality of life, career prospects, and to offer something to society. From the analysis of the research data it emerges that the criteria most students consider when choosing a profession, regardless of the socio-economic status of their families, tend to be shaped by the economic crisis in the social and occupational field of Greece, and particularly in their personal and family life.

Therefore, the economic crisis through the phenomena of poverty and the unemployment of a large proportion of Greek citizens seems to have a significant impact on the occupational expectations of most students in the sample, regardless of their socio-economic background. Finally, other important factors that according to the students influence the formation of their occupational expectations are: the immediate and the extended family environment (parents and relatives), the friendship environment (friends/peers) and the place of residence.

Although the findings of this research are not generalized, they are interesting and indicative because they reveal the occupational expectations of the 2nd grade Day General Lyceum students in Western Greece at a time of economic crisis, as well as the criteria and the factors that influence the formation of their occupational expectations. Similar research on a larger scale both in Greece and in other European countries experiencing the economic crisis, such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, would be useful for revealing the implications of the crisis for shaping the consciousness and life mapping of young people.

Notes:

1. In Giddens work (2002, p. 355) it is noted that the upper middle class 'consists mainly of those holding managerial or professional positions.'
2. Giddens (2002, p. 356) mentions that the lower middle class 'is a heterogeneous category that includes people who work as office employees, business visitors, teachers, nursing staff and others.'

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About the Authors

Georgia Spiliopoulou is Kindergarten Teacher, M.Ed. and Ph.D student in the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Patras, Greece. E-mail: geospil.spiliopoulou@gmail.com.

Dr. Gerasimos Koustourakis is Associate Professor in the Sociology of Education and School Knowledge at the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Patras, Greece. He is also a tutor in the Postgraduate Studies Programme, "Studies in Education", in the Faculty of Humanities of Hellenic Open University teaching Open and Distance Learning. E-mail: koustourakis@upatras.gr.

Dr. Anna Asimaki is an Assistant Professor in Sociology of Education at the Department of Primary Education of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Patras, Greece. She is also a tutor in the Postgraduate Studies Programme in the same Department, teaching Professional Development for Teachers. E-mail: asimaki@upatras.gr.

Dr. Pandelis Kiprianos is Professor in History and History of Education. He specializes also in Comparative History of Education, Educational Policy and Sociology of Sports. E-mail: Kiprian@upatras.gr.

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