

CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING BY THE CAREERS OFFICE OF THE T.E.I. OF CRETE: SEVEN YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: *The Career Office of the T.E.I. of Crete, since its establishment in 1997, serves the students and graduates of the Institute by providing: information on job openings and academic programs, workshops, lectures, employer recruitment as well as professional advising and counseling. This paper presents the characteristics of the demand for these services during the past seven years.*

Keywords: *Career Office, Career Guidance, Career Services*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Career Office was established in the Technological Educational Institute of Crete in the mid of 1997 within the framework of the Operational Program for Education and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK) funded by the Ministry of National Education under initially the Second (1994-1999) and then the Third (2000-2007) European Community Support Framework. The Career Office aims at becoming a liaison between education and production, the academic community and the market place by creating the grounds for their direct and creative cooperation. The mission of the Career Office is basically two-fold: to advice and assist students at all degree levels about career choices and decision-making, job opportunities, other academic and vocational programs and internships that will enhance their qualifications; and to

assist employers from the Public and the Private Sector wishing to recruit well qualified labor with technological specialization.

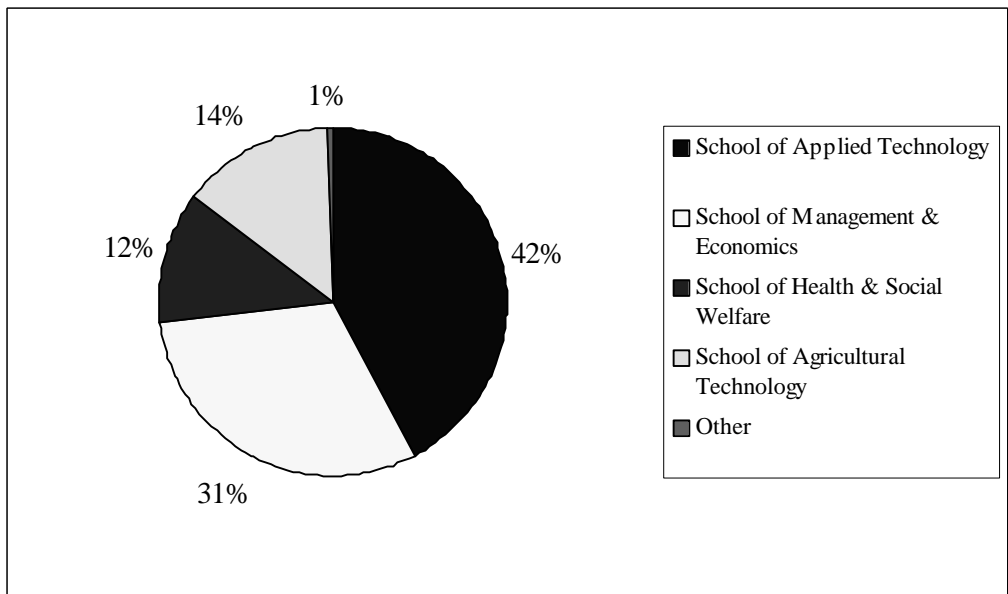
2. WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS OF THE CAREER OFFICE

One of the various actions applied to serve the mission of informing students and graduates on different issues of their interest is the arrangement of public events, meetings and seminars. During the last seven years the Career Office has organized several meetings on topics such as: *Graduate studies for T.E.I.'s graduates in Greece and Abroad* (offered once a year since 1999), *the Professions of the Future*, *O.A.E.D.'s projects for Unemployed and for new Entrepreneurs*, *Professional Rights*, as well as events aiming to attract the industry people and to match the graduates' qualities to potential market demand. Towards the realization of this goal, three "Career Days" events were organized so far. One designated for the graduates of the School of Management & Economics, one for the graduates of the School of Applied Technology and one for all the senior students and graduates of the Institute. By organizing such meetings on a regular basis we aim to create contacts for our graduates in the business world and to promote the Institute and its educational and research activities. Additionally, special workshops on: *CV creating*, *Job Finding and Applying Strategies*, *Preparing for an Interview*, and *Career Planning* are offered twice a year by the Career Office. The intention of these workshops is to empower current students and graduates to become self reliant, career informed and able to manage their careers lifelong.

3. THE CAREER'S OFFICE DATABASES

With the aid of two specially designed databases and electronic equipment, the Career Office managed to support its daily operation and keep track of the demand for the different services offered. In the first database we inscribe the students and graduates that are interested in finding a job or an internship placement, along with the job openings announced by the companies. In the other database we inscribe the ones who visit the Career Office looking for all the other types of services offered (e.g. information on graduate studies and scholarships, vocational programs, career planning, CV writing, career counseling, etc.) During the last seven years more than 4500 students and graduates of the T.E.I. of Crete along with a few from other Higher Education Institutes have being registered in the Career's Office databases. Registration as a user of the career office is optional. One of the goals that have been recently achieved is that the Department of Electrical and the Department of Civil Engineering require from their students, when they submit the necessary documents for graduation, to visit the Career Office in order to be informed about the services provided.

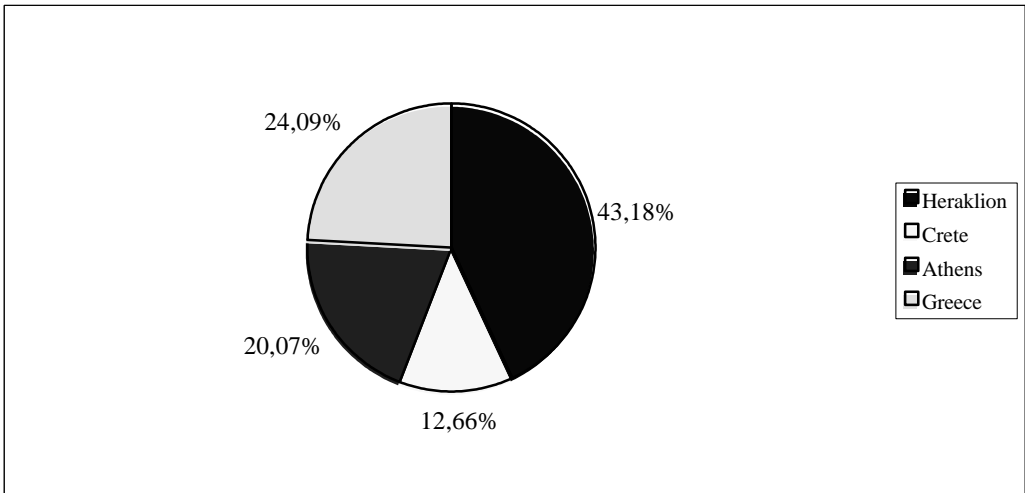
Since its establishment and up to May 2005, 1938 students and 2713 graduates have been registered in the two databases described in the previous paragraph. Among the graduates the majority (62%) have graduated within the last 3 years showing that alumni do not really keep contacts with the Institute and prefer to use other means for building their career. The percentage of male (50,12%) and female (49,88%) arrivals is almost identical, whereas the vast majority of our visitors (83%) are singles, as expected. Additionally, among our graduates a percentage of 38,77% completed their studies within 4 years, 51,68% took 5 to 6 years and 9,55% took more 7 years to graduate. The ones that appear to use the services of the Career Office more frequently are the students and graduates of the School of Applied Technology followed by the School of Management and Economics. The following graph shows the visitors of the Career Office according to their School.



Graph 1: Visitors of Career Office according to School

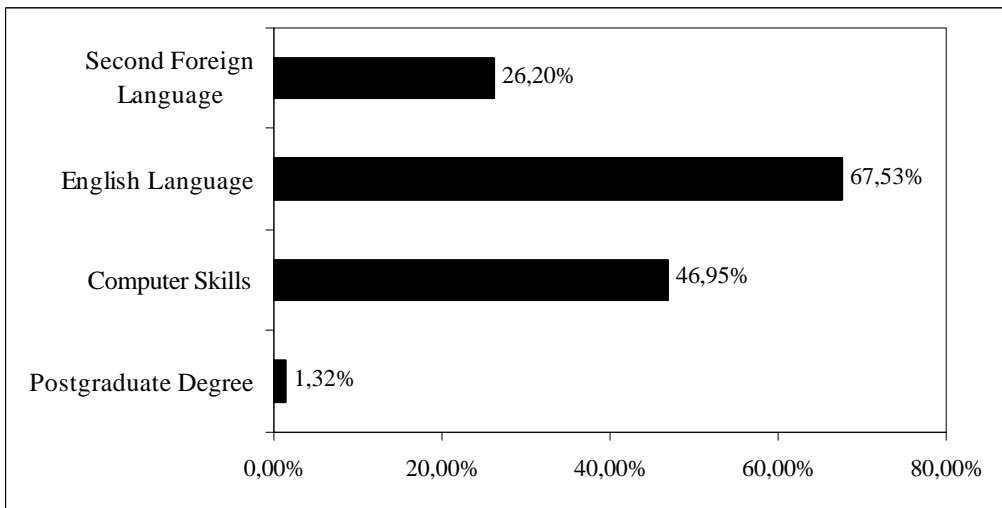
Among the graduates who visited the Career Office looking for a job placement, the 31,36% has declared unemployed whereas the rest of them, although already employed, are interested in improving their career. Men surpass the women in unemployment according to our records but this is due to the fact that they enter the job market later since they first have to fulfill their military obligations. 85,64% of the male graduates registered in our database have completed their military service as of today. During the past seven years the Career Office assisted more than one thousand students and graduates in finding a job placement or an internship, whereas more than four thousands applicants have been informed individually for specific job openings. When it comes to choosing where to seek for a job placement or an internship, 55,84%

of our graduates prefer to stay in Crete. The following graph shows the preferences of our graduates according to the location of their occupation.



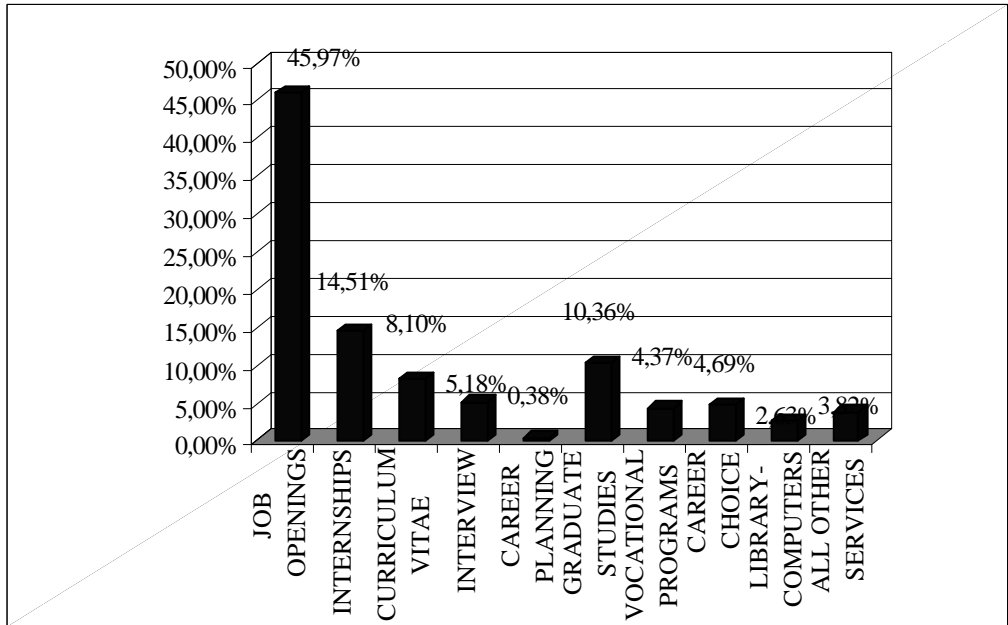
Graph 2:Region Preferences for Job Placement or Internship

Among our graduates, a very low percentage (1,32%), own a postgraduate degree. However this number is rapidly changing as the interest for graduate studies rises continuously. The following graph shows this along with a few more qualifications of our graduates.



Graph 3:Qualifications of our Graduates

Senior students and graduates interested in job vacancies and practical training placements are required to fill a special CV form. 60,48% of our users belong to this category while the remaining 39,52% of them, have visited the Career Office looking for all the other services offered. The following graph shows the exhibited demand for all the different services.



Graph 4: Demand for Different Services

4. CONCLUSIONS

When the Career Office started its operation it had to fight among other difficulties the suspicion from the side of a small number of students and staff of the Institute. This suspicion was mainly due to the fact that until then the concept of career guidance in Higher Education was completely unknown in Greece and the office had to prove itself as a useful facility both in and outside the Institute. Today, this goal has not only been accomplished but moreover the services offered have found cordial supporters among the students, the graduates, the faculty as well as the businessmen who visit the office.

Up to date, the service that exhibits the highest demand is information on job vacancies, followed by information on internships and information on graduate studies. Moreover, demand for the various aspects of Career Counseling increases systematically as the students overcome their initial skepticism and hesitation and become more familiar with it. Among the top priorities of the staff of the Career Office is to improve, and further develop these services so that they manage to meet the continuously changing needs of both the academic community and the employment market.

5. REFERENCES

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