

CAREER COUNSELLING IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE LIAISON OFFICE OF T.E.I. OF PIRAEUS

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ABSTRACT

The studies and career decision making is crucial for every individual. Especially, nowadays, in an era, characterised mainly by the rapid change and internationalization of labor, deciding and managing a career becomes complicated and it is often frustrated. The person is required to handle knowledge, to recognize the aspirations, values, needs and roles involved. With these new data we are talking about a new model for Professional Development which is the model of Personal Career Management. In this paper we will present the role of the COUNSELLING SERVICE offered by the LIAISON OFFICE of the T.E.I. of PIRAEUS which has been in operation since 1998, offering a wide range of activities-services available for everyone in the T.E.I. of PIRAEUS educational community, in other words both for students and graduates of all the institute's departments and for its educational and administrative staff- relating to Psychological and Career Counselling and Psychological Support & Encouragement. More specifically, through the development of the above model, we approach the modern and pragmatic dimension of the individual Career as a gradual process and complex process that involves the counseling, the psychological and educational dimension and last but not least also requires the active participation of the student/graduate.

KEY WORDS: *Counselling, career, decision making, make a career, TEI Students/graduates.*

1. THE LIAISON OFFICE OF THE T.E.I. OF PIRAEUS

The **Liaison Office of the T.E.I. of Piraeus** was set up as part of the Institute's efforts to provide support where needed and to reach out to a greater number of contacts, thereby allowing the T.E.I. to become a permanent link between the educational community and the forces of production. Founded in 1993, the Liaison Office of the T.E.I. of Piraeus has added to its activities the counselling service. The **COUNSELLING SERVICE** offered has been in operation since 1998 and its services are available for everyone in the T.E.I. of PIRAEUS educational community, in other words both for students and graduates of the entire

institute's departments- from every Greek technological institute/university as well- and for its educational and administrative staff. The office offers a wide range of activities relating to Psychological and Career Counselling and Psychological Support & Encouragement.

2. CAREER COUNSELLING

Students' counselling is part of a broad sector of applied psychology, which has been developed in the frames of career counselling as well as of guidance and support of the students/graduates during their effort to pursue a career according to their dexterities and abilities, or their effort to resolve psychological problems associating with the academic and professional life. (Kantas A., 1998)

The studies and career decision making is crucial for every individual. Especially, nowadays, in an era, characterised mainly by the rapid change and internationalization of labor, deciding and managing a career becomes complicated and it is often frustrated. The person is required to handle knowledge, to recognize the aspirations, values, needs and roles involved. With these new data we are talking about a new model for Professional Development which is the model of Personal Career Management. As far this model is concerned, the individual is required to have the possibility to reconsider the relation between the acquired education, the job and the personal dexterities/abilities, to be prepared through a lifelong learning process to be redirected successfully along with the rapid changes of labor.

Consequently, the Professional Choice is not a unique final decision but it is the result of a whole series of progressive decisions, a process by which a person finds every time what is important in life and what are his/her main priorities.

Through the development of the above model, we approach the modern and pragmatic dimension of the individual Career as a gradual and complex process that involves the counseling, the psychological and educational dimension and last but not least also requires the active participation of the student/graduate. The model of Personal Career Management is approached as a gradual and complex process that involves the counseling, the psychological and educational dimension and last but not least also requires the active participation of the student/graduate. The student has already made an initial educational choice. After that he has to make a professional choice which can either be further education professional training/seminars, master degree, PhD etc.

At this stage the individual realises more consciously his gradual transition in the market. Last but not least, the third stage is the application/adjustment in the workplace. He becomes active in workplaces that reflect the qualitative characteristics of his personality. (Soumeli L., 2006)

In order to fulfill the above aims of the three stages the student/graduate should have abilities such as the following:

- Self knowledge
- Ability for opportunity pursuit
- Action planning
- Interests, personality and action combination
- Negotiation ability
- Acceptance and confrontation of social/economical uncertainty (NOTHING IS PERMANENT)
- Flexibility

- Developmental view of life, education and action
- Political awareness (Krivas S., 1998)

In the Liaison Office of T.E.I. of Piraeus, counselling is a dynamic process within which the Counsellor works together with a group or an individual to examine issues of concern and to facilitate the task of finding alternative solutions. The aim is not to issue guidelines, i.e. to tell people what they should do – it is, rather, a question of initiating a process which makes it easier for individuals to make the best personal choices in keeping with the circumstances which exist. In effect, our counselling service helps people to define the nature of the difficulty they are facing, to appraise the possible solutions and to select the most appropriate for themselves. The Counsellor does not commit him/herself to one particular solution, respecting instead the choice of the person who has sought counselling.

3. WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS OF THE LIAISON OFFICE'S COUNSELLING SERVICE

Practically, the counselling progress consists of four stages:

1. establishment and building of the relationship between counsellor-student/graduate
2. goal setting (the goals have to be clear, definite, effectible and desirable)
3. intervention (information collection, assessment or reassessment of abilities, dexterities, facilitation in decision making, amelioration of time perspective)
4. Feedback.

The office has offered through the years a wide range of activities relating to Psychological and Career Counselling and Psychological Support & Encouragement. Part of the career counselling process-offered either on a personal or on a group form- is the following sectors:

The **Sector of Educational Advice** which provides with information on:

- Postgraduate Studies
- Scholarships and bequests
- Transfer options to other courses
- Training programmes and further education for socially vulnerable groups
- Seminars, special events, conferences, etc. 8th

The **Sector of Employment** which:

- Offers a systematic framework to help students and graduates get in touch with companies and find work placement and career opportunities respectively.
- Organises Careers Days, Seminars and Meetings focussing on interesting topics that meet the needs of those who attend.
- Keeps records of companies and organisation
- Informs about professional Rights 9th

The **Sector of Career Counselling** which performs workshops/seminars that aims to give information about:

- Techniques of job search (CV/cover letter writing, ways of work pursuance, techniques of interview and personnel hiring)
- Conflict management (Development of communicational/negotiation abilities in the workplace)
- Self development (self-esteem, management crisis, stress management)
- Learning techniques (study program, study time management, amelioration for learning motivation)
- Reinforcement of disabled students/graduates and of other vulnerable social groups. 10th

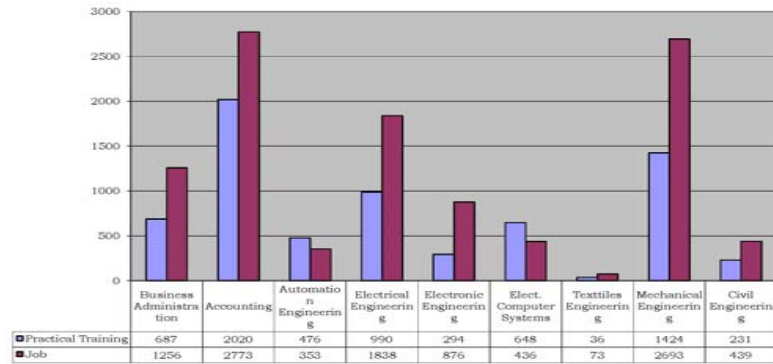
Another action is the arrangement of public events, open fests/forums.

During the last eighteen years the Liaison Office has organized several meetings on topics such as LIAISON 2007: From Study to Professional Life, Careers Days, and Postgraduate Studies etc.

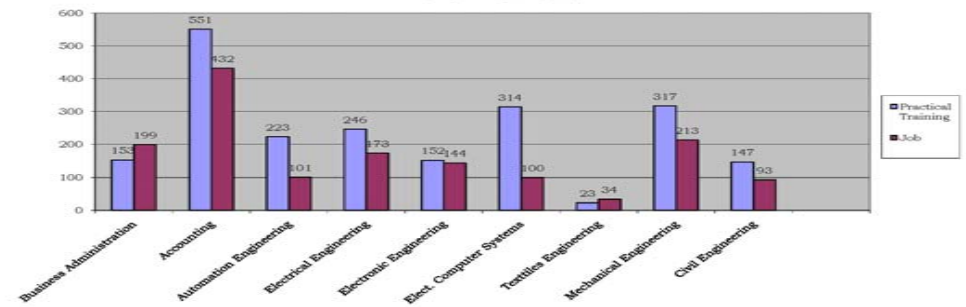
4. The Liaison's Office databases

With the aid of one specially designed database-which replaced two older databases- and electronic equipment, we manage to support our daily operation and keep track of the demand for the different services offered. 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, 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 counselling, etc.) During the last eighteen years more than **15.522** students and graduates of the T.E.I. of Piraeus along with a few from other Higher Education Institutes have been registered. Registration as a user of the liaison office is optional. The following graphs show the exhibited demand for all the different services.

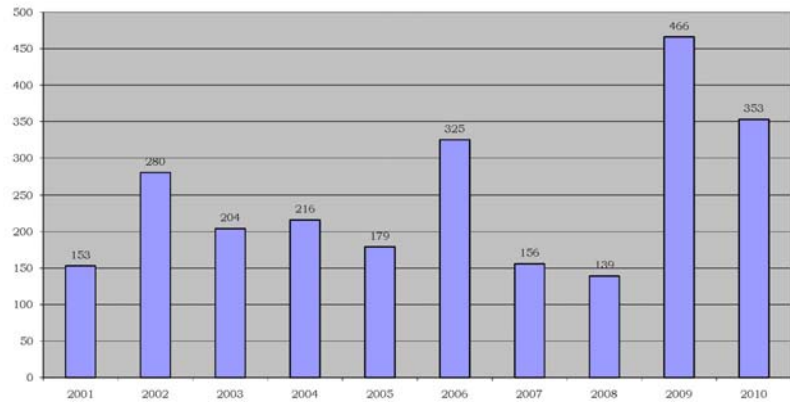
CVs of graduates - students sent to businesses for the period
01/09/2001 to 12/31/201



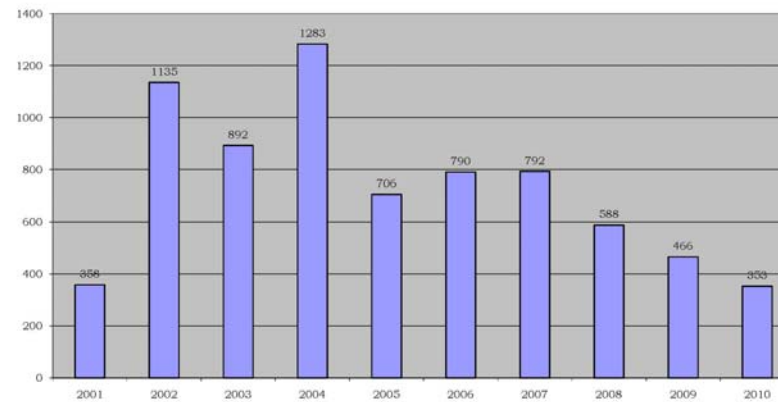
Distribution of graduates - students applications based on their section
from 01/09/2001 up to 31/12/20



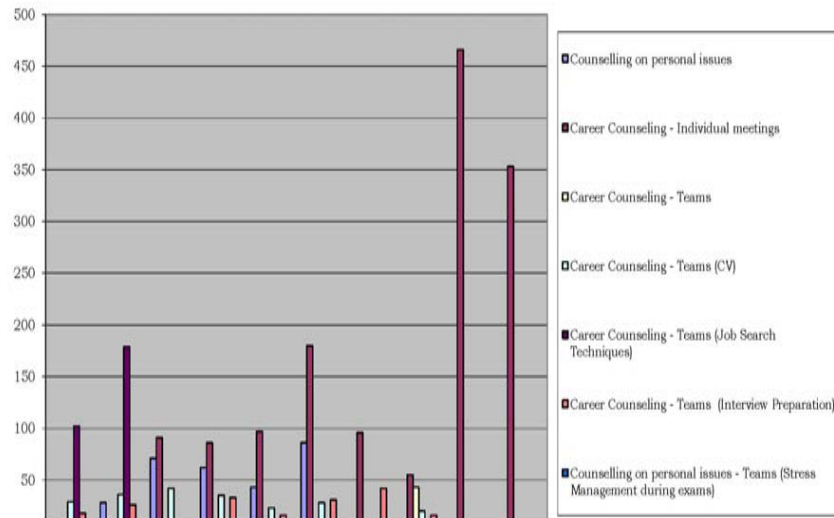
Graduates - students visits Counselling Service
from 01/09/2001 to 31/12/2010



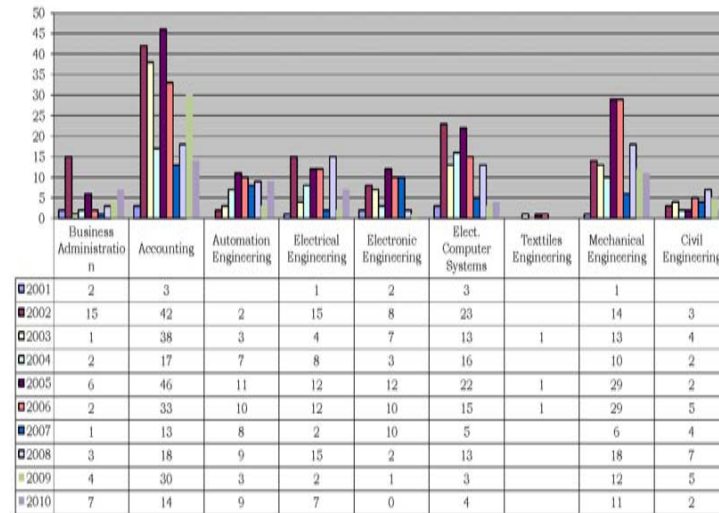
Graduates - students visits the Education Counselling Service
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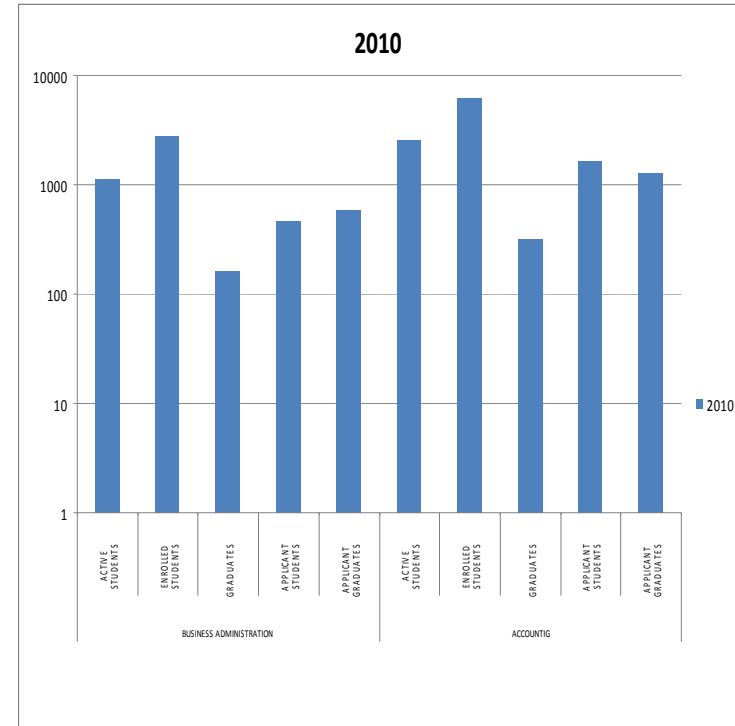
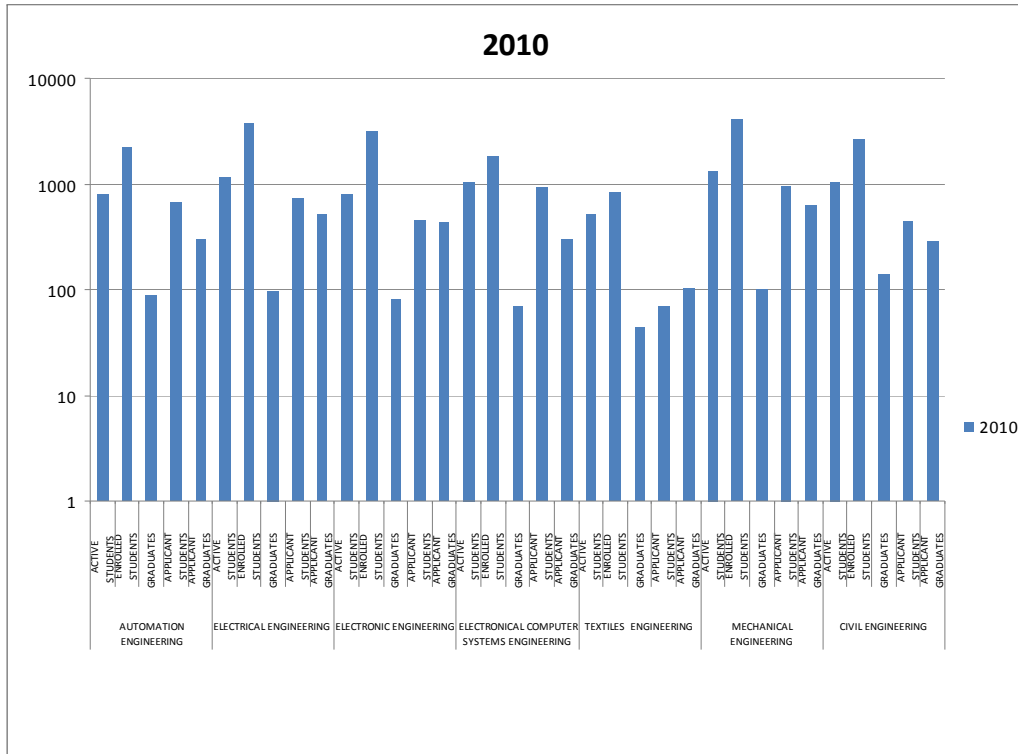


Distribution of graduates - students visits of Counselling Service
from 01/09/2001 to 31/12/201



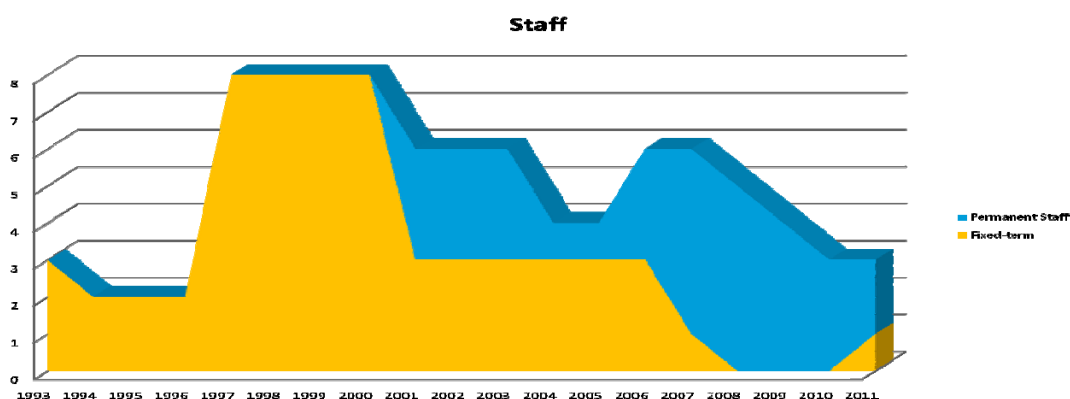
Practical Training placements from 1/09/2001 to 31/12/2010



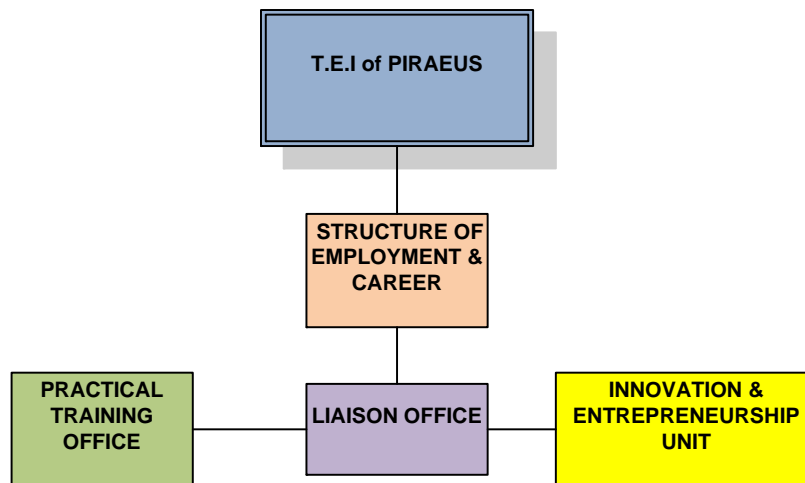


5. Conclusion

After almost eighteen years of experience Liaison Office, statistics show that it has not only been accomplished its goal 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 postgraduate studies followed by information on internships and information on job vacancies. Moreover, demand for the various aspects of Career Counselling increases systematically. With its modern communications network at the core of its operations, the Liaison Office co-operates with similar offices in Universities and T.E.Is throughout Greece and abroad. Among the top priorities of the staff 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. In that effort Liaison Office of T.E.I. of Piraeus has also established and applies a quality management system for Counselling and Advising Services to Educational, Employment and Practical Training Issues. However the reduction of the stuff & funding the last years has caused an incline and as result of that the last year as far as career counselling is concerned the activities were limited to career counselling individual meetings.



Nevertheless, at the end of 2010 with the establishment of the Structure of employment and career- which consists of Liaison, Practical Training Office and Innovation & Entrepreneurship unit- a **Counselling Center**, modernly equipped, recently started to operate as a separate unit with specialised experienced stuff, with ambitious plans, use of modern tools always in cooperation with the above mentioned Offices. So from now on the career counselling service of the Liaison Office will be performed with the help of the **Counselling Center** under the coordination of SEC.



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