

# MISMANAGEMENT, AMBIGUITY AND DELUSION: TRAINING PRIMARY TEACHERS IN GREECE

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**Abstract** - *Preparing primary teachers in Greece is an area of great ambiguity and frustration for many students. This paper seeks to show the influence of social origins, characteristics and qualifications of entrants to primary teaching and its role in social mobility. The paper is based on original research with first year student teachers along with unpublished research from government sources. Outcomes of the research demonstrate a greater need for creative and strategic planning in the training of primary teachers.*

## Introduction

**T**he aim of this paper is to examine the socio-economic position of primary teachers in Greece. An historical account of the development of the profession of primary teachers in Greece during the last century is offered in order to place current perceptions of primary teachers in perspective. General attitudes towards the teaching profession are included in order that mechanisms for improving current management and recruitment of Greek primary teachers, can be seen within the context of, not only Greek society in general, but also of primary teachers themselves.

Finally, research findings concerning the contemporary position and status of primary teachers in Greece are presented. Such data includes information concerning financial rewards for teachers, current numbers of teachers, their gender, age and job prospects. Such an understanding is essential for the future planning process of Greek education and, more importantly, for teacher morale.

## Status and prestige of professions

In order to understand the role, position and the status of the teaching profession, it is necessary to develop an understanding of the various aspects and factors that affect these issues. Societies throughout the world hold varying views about the occupations with which people are involved or have chosen. In short, there are diverse levels of understanding and 'respect' for jobs, based on traditional and historical perceptions, the subjects students pursue and the

individual perceptions of members of society. Each society has developed a 'prestige system' in which every occupation can be rated. In the past, earning money through commerce was considered a low-status position while those members of the aristocracy who squandered their time to no positive effect were attributed great esteem. In different societies wealth, intelligence, qualifications and ownership of property all contribute towards social prestige. In some cultures religious leaders have power, and therefore status, while in other countries they occupy an indifferent position. Lieberman (1956: 452) claimed that

*"Status can not be equated with occupational or personal worth. People may accord a certain occupational group low status in the belief that the occupation does not require much intelligence, skill or training, although it may in fact require a high degree of each of those factors."*

Professional status does not necessarily represent worth, but rather the image that a society has developed for a profession and its practitioners. According to Kelsall and Kelsall (1969) such an image emanates from the following characteristics:

- Long and exacting education and professional training. High status jobs have strict procedures of selection recruitment training and certification. Doctors and lawyers are good examples of the above phenomenon.
- Following a lengthy education, the practitioners of prestigious professions have to do work that is highly skilled nature and it therefore becomes unfamiliar for the outsiders. The less familiar someone is with the members and the work of a particular profession the higher the prestige s/he is likely to attach to its practitioners. These professions have an 'esoteric' knowledge and terminology not readily available to the public at large.
- High salaries and income in general are undoubtedly associated with the above types of professions. Financial rewards which allow a certain style of living are fundamental in the societies with which this discussion is concerned.
- Quite often the prestige of an occupation is related to the relative freedom from outside interference and control. In other words, the autonomy of the profession, and the extent to which its practitioners are subject to any advice or manipulation from outside, is an indicator of its authority and *ipso facto* its status.
- Finally, the social origin from which the practitioners of the profession traditionally come, good conditions of work, a client-patron relationship and the existence of a professional code of conduct, imply an occupation highly regarded in society. All the above could also be affected by stereotypes formulated for various reasons, distinct in each society.

## Teaching as a profession

It is not difficult to realise that when it comes to the teaching profession, and particularly those dealing with younger pupils, the majority of the above characteristics do not apply. This implies that teaching is a non-prestigious occupation, no matter how fundamental for the development of the society it might be. This situation occurs despite the 'reprofessionalisation' of teaching, which has been formally promoted in many Western societies. This has been encouraged through stricter procedures of selection and recruitment, through longer initial training programmes and more formalised accountability procedures, with governments taking greater control of quality and outcomes of education (OECD 1990).

There is little aura of mystery and surprise for those observing the work of teachers. Most people have passed through the process of education and therefore feel adequately qualified to express confident opinions. Examination results and effective disciplinary procedures (Cowan 1993) are factors which influence UK parents in their choice of school. Professional knowledge, and flexible and creative teaching skills are qualities which are assumed and accepted as inherent in every teacher.

It is still a sad fact that a profession dominated by women has less prestige in most societies than those dominated by men. The fact that women have increased family responsibilities is seen to have a direct impact on the cohesion of the professional group, which in turn is frequently blamed for inhibiting of the process of recognition and appreciation of the profession (Vassilou-Papageorgiou 1992). This is further combined with the fact that in many countries, Greece being amongst them, historical, psychological and social factors have negatively affected women in terms of their career interest. Their interest has been further suppressed by the working conditions and the general working – male dominated – environment.

All the above factors, along with the fact that in many countries teachers traditionally come from lower-middle classes, present the teaching profession as one which one would not choose to enter unless other professional avenues were closed (Vassilou-Papageorgiou, *ibid.*). In Greece, teaching is seen as an escape from lower-class status. The process of appreciation of the teacher's role has been a slow one. Stereotypes abound and negative forces influence the attitude of potential student teachers, their selection and treatment.

By focusing, in this paper, on the Greek situation, it is hoped lessons can be learned for other contexts. Presenting the following data and clarifying current conditions in Greece concerning attitudes towards primary education, it is clear that there is a great need for a more systematic and pragmatic planning approach.

Such a process should relate primary education with other sectors of education, coupled with a long-term vision for teacher training, translated into appropriate workable strategies.

## Historical overview

Primary teachers in Greece still struggle with matters concerning their status, prestige, recognition and, more importantly, the quality of training and access to jobs. The turn of the century found Greek primary teachers fighting for recognition and appreciation of their role. The level and quality of their education were of a very low standard and in some cases teachers were only primary school graduates. The results of that were: low prestige, low salaries and, generally speaking, a social position that could only be compared with that of the menial workers (Pyrgiotakis 1992). The fact that primary teachers were continually under the threat of redundancy could only make the condition worse.

This situation did not change until the 1930s when significant developments occurred. In 1933 Pedagogical Academies were established in six cities, followed a year later by a seventh. The role of the Academies was to prepare future primary teachers by offering two years of professional training. Undoubtedly the establishment of these institutions was a step forward to the extent that primary teachers were upgraded on both social and scientific grounds. Teachers would go through a form of tertiary education which would give them higher status than previously and enable them to feel prouder, perhaps more motivated by their intended occupation. It was further believed that subjects taught – Pedagogy, Psychology, Philosophy and courses related to the subjects to be taught in the primary school – would also ascribe a greater ‘scientific weight’ to the profession (Evangelopoulos 1989).

Teaching became a profession for which training was required and, *ipso facto*, its practitioners gained some merit. Unfortunately, such status was limited by the fact that Pedagogical Academies did not have University status, mainly due to the training process of teachers being considerably shorter (two years) than degree courses (at least four years). Teaching, therefore, did not qualify as an ‘academic profession’ and did not assume equality with the traditionally prestigious occupations like doctors, bankers and lawyers. Such problems are of course world-wide and teachers in most countries would identify totally with the problems of enhancing teacher status.

In Greek society matters of prestige and status still form an important part of cultural identity. Social position, image and status within the community have always been considered crucial for personal and social acceptance. In Greece, then, it was the lower social classes who saw the teaching profession as a social move upwards. Others from higher social levels considered teaching, particularly in primary schools, as socially downgrading (Pyrgiotakis 1992).

The situation did not change significantly during the next three decades, mainly because of the socio-political developments in the country. Dictatorship (1936-1940), the Second World War (1939-1945), and the civil war (1945-1949) discouraged any changes and improvements in the field of education in general. At the beginning of the 1950s, following the civil war, teachers found themselves more or less in the same position and with the same status as before, but now under considerable ideological pressure from the government. Teachers, as all other Greek employees dependent on the state, were manipulated by the central government and used as agents of a certain anti-left political ideology (Folerou & Friderikou 1991). This situation did not increase respect for the teaching profession within Greek society.

During the 1960s circumstances were modified to some extent. A number of significant improvements occurred concerning financial rewards for teachers and with regard to their training. In 1963 primary teachers' salaries were equalised with those of other teachers and civil servants. (Until then they had been much lower). In 1964 the duration of training in the Pedagogical Academies was increased from two to three years. Within one year, primary teachers achieved an advancement in both salary and training terms. This immediately was reflected in greater prestige for primary teachers in Greek society. The Academies were still not of university status, reinforcing the fact that primary teaching was still a second class profession, while primary teachers themselves were subordinate to other, secondary school colleagues. Secondary teachers had university education in the subjects they taught and thus a higher status in the social hierarchy.

The dictatorship of 1967 countered progress in the early sixties with teachers reduced to a lower status through a decrease in the length of training (Evangelopoulos 1989). Teachers were obliged to succumb to immense political and ideological pressure and manipulation (*ibid*). The new regime also introduced another measure that resulted in the downgrading of the profession. Secondary graduates achieving an 'excellent' grade on their final certificates were allowed to enter the Academies without exams, while entrance examination was required for all the University departments (Pyrgiotakis 1992). The dictatorship that lasted for seven years was undoubtedly a period that resulted in the deterioration of the teacher's role and morale.

What can be argued after examining the developments in the profession in this century until the mid-1970s is that despite some improvements – some of them only temporary – the role and status of the primary teachers, as well as their place in the social system of Greek society, had not improved much since the beginning of the century.

### Attitudes of primary teachers in the late seventies

There is interesting and important research which confirms the above statements and which demonstrates the perceptions of primary teachers concerning their profession and status. The main findings of Pyrgiotakis' 1976 research are presented below. The sample of the research was 436 primary teachers who were surveyed by questionnaire.

The outcomes of the research confirmed the argument that teaching has been used as a social bridge to cross the path between the social classes. More specifically: 57.3% of male primary teachers and 38.2% of female came from farming families with 17.2% male and 21.4% female deriving from working class families (manual workers and various technicians). It is also interesting to notice that the vast majority of the primary teachers at that time (1976) came from villages: 72.9% male, 37.7% female.

FIGURE 1: Place of residence of primary teachers in Greece (1976)



The profession, as it was argued in the research, is still fed by socio-economic classes that live mainly in villages and small towns. The fact that a majority of female teachers came from cities (39.6%) is not difficult to explain. It reflects attitudes and values of a certain part of the urban population concerning the role and prospects of women.

When asked about the reasons that made students choose this specific profession, the majority of male teachers argued that external pressures - such as, for instance, insufficient time or finances for longer training - dominated personal interest and inclination. During the seventies immediate appointment by the state was almost guaranteed. There was a slight differentiation in the responses of female teachers however, external factors played a significant role in their choice.

This indirect disapproval of the profession on behalf of its practitioners, reflects a personal dissatisfaction and again perpetuates low image. It is important to note that such attitudes did not necessarily relate to the nature of their work. Most respondents felt happy with the job itself. Disaffection emanated from its status. It is also interesting to note that 70% of the respondents did not wish their sons and daughters to follow the same occupation. This response confirms the argument that teaching was only regarded as a bridge from which teachers' offspring could attain higher social levels, for both themselves and ultimately, their parents.

Finally, in this specific research, teachers, according to their responses, felt that in the prestige scale, their profession was placed below the academic professions although beyond that of priests and manual workers. They also expressed the opinion that they were quite highly regarded by low socio-economic groups (the groups from which they came), whereas other groups (civil servants, rich landowners, scientists) did not manifest the same respect for the teaching profession. They identified as reasons for the low status, the low financial rewards, the nature of the profession (teachers are a social mediator between the children and the society) and the fact that the results and outcomes of their work are not immediately quantifiable. According to primary teachers' opinions, secondary teachers drew their (higher) status from the scientific area that they represented - mathematicians, biologists - rather than from the quality of teaching itself.

The above mentioned research described accurately the social position of the primary teachers in Greece, as it was in the mid-1970s. Since that time there have been some developments which have had an impact on the profession. In 1984 the Pedagogical Departments were established as autonomous units within the existing universities. This development meant that teachers' education and therefore future teachers would be both academically and socially upgraded. It was considered as the major achievement of the profession in this century. Furthermore, primary teachers' salaries became equal to those of other civil servants and those secondary teachers who had enjoyed university education.

In 1985, after the introduction of Primary Teaching Departments (PTDs), further research was conducted by Folerou and Friderikou (1991). The research was undertaken in the second half of the eighties. Its results drew an accurate picture of the profession just before the consequences of the upgrading of the profession were felt. It showed that 54% of the sample came from villages (67% male and 44% female teachers) while 58% of male and 34% of female teachers' fathers were farmers, technicians or workers in the primary sector of the economy.

In 1985, then, primary teachers still originated from the lower socio-economic groups of society. Reasons for their occupational choice and the motives that lead them to the profession must be searched in the characteristics of the group. 83% of the males and 56% of the females sampled claimed that they had chosen teaching as a profession as the only way of 'escaping' from their environment, as a 'compulsory choice'. 10% of female teachers of the sample maintained that they were directly forced by their families to follow the profession, mainly because it had a short training period and because the Academies were close to their homes. In short their choice was an obligatory one, and not related in anyway to their ability, interests or ambitions. Only 23% of the respondents (17% male and 32% female) admitted that they had chosen the profession because of personal interest. It was interesting to note the difference in the responses between male and female teachers reflecting such diversity in the 1976 research (see Figure 1).

The research also reveals some other aspects of the profession as they occurred shortly after the upgrading of primary teacher training. According to teachers' opinions, primary teachers in Greece still felt part of a second-class profession, manifested by continuing low salary and lack of self-fulfilment. It was realised by some that at least their position had the potential (albeit uncertain) to upgrade their status eventually. Like many other countries, teaching was not seen as an attractive option but as one way of escaping from the lower echelons of society while achieving a position with security. The fact that Pedagogical Academies for training primary teachers were established close to some small cities was another factor which made the profession more appealing to both parents and students. Things have changed now. There is an increase of Universities in many regions in Greece: a move away from university education being focused in important cities like Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras. Furthermore, Pedagogical Academies (with two years training) do not exist. Today students must study for four years in order to become qualified primary teachers.

Unfortunately, other problems now beset the process of primary teacher training. Unemployment has increased considerably among primary teachers as a result of governmental policies (recruitment of teachers with short training



courses, over-production of teachers by the PTDs in the past, etc.). Today the list of qualified teachers, waiting to be appointed by the state, has reached a level of 20,000 and, as is shown in the subsequent section of this paper, these figures are increasing every year. Despite these statistics, students are still choosing the PTDs for their tertiary education.

Vassilou-Papageorgiou (1992) sums up the position, the status and the prospects of primary teachers in Greece:

- One of the main characteristics of the primary teaching profession is that most of its practitioners had short professional training.
- The percentage of women teachers is very high compared to the overall representation of women in national employment statistics. 50% of primary teachers are women, while only 35.9% are employed in other areas.
- The standards for entering the profession are not set by teachers themselves but by the State.
- The salary is that of a civil servant.
- Job prospects are not encouraging.

Vassilou-Papageorgiou (*ibid.*) claims that the establishment of University departments for teacher training has the potential to counter the negative image of teachers, still perpetuated by public opinion. Teachers see that as an opportunity to establish themselves among the professions with prestige and status. For the time being though, this is no more than an chimera of positive prospects as unemployment increases.

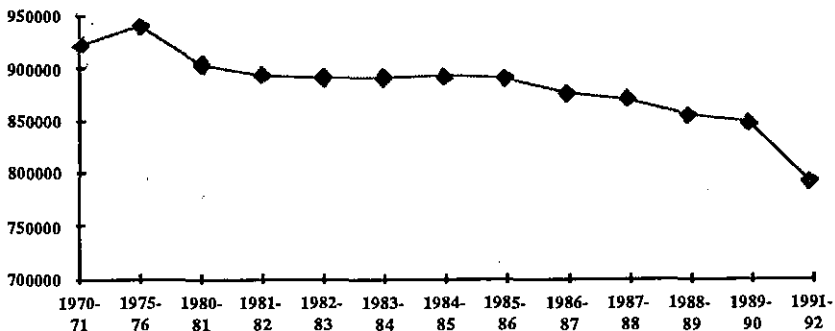
## Reality in schools

The following comment by Bouzakis (1992: 29) puts the above situation into sharp perspective:

*"There are today 19,052 unemployed primary school teachers. If one calculates that every year about 1,500 teachers are hired and that in addition the birth rates are declining, then a new teacher can expect to wait fifteen years before being hired!"*

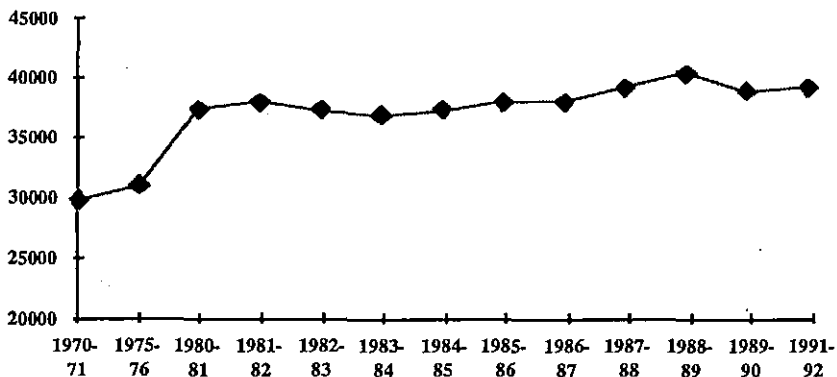
The following figures underline the situation even more succinctly: (Source: Ministry of Education, unpublished statistics)

FIGURE 2: Pupil numbers in primary education



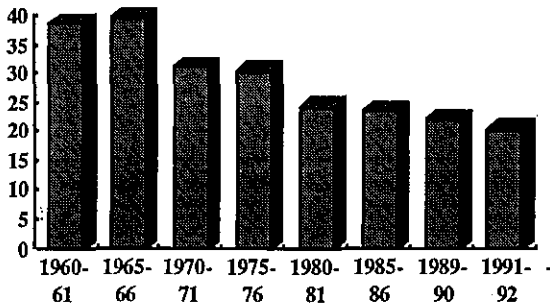
The above chart clarifies the decline in the total population of primary pupils in Greece during the last few decades. At the same time, as Figure 3 indicates, the number of teachers in primary education increased considerably during the seventies, after which they have remained constant.

FIGURE 3: Primary teachers in service 1970/1 - 1991/2



A justification for the increase in teacher numbers has been verified in terms of policy-making, with reference to the fact that the pupil-teacher ratio was reduced to desired levels (approx. 21 pupils per teacher). This is shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4: Pupil-Teacher ratio in primary schools in Greece.



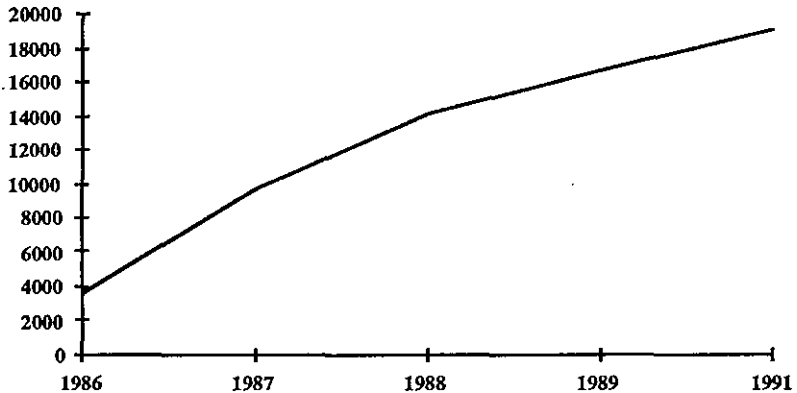
It seems that once the desired pupil-teacher ratio reached desired levels, the number of primary teachers was stabilised. One would expect an appropriate response by the state to control the number of students studying to become teachers, since, on the one hand birth rates were declining (141,000 in 1981, 103,000 in 1991). On the other hand, the declarations and the policies that followed implied greater controlling of university students numbers.

Government response was interesting, if irrational. In 1982, in order to confront the unemployment in other professions, the government allowed graduates from other departments in universities to continue their studies in the second year of the Pedagogical Academies after success in examinations which, in fact, were no more than a formality (Pyrgiotakis 1992). The demand for such transition was very high, as employment in the teaching profession, at that time, was guaranteed. Those who, for various reasons, did not manage to get accepted, along with other undergraduates, went abroad for short training courses (mainly one year courses in former Yugoslavia). Such training proved to be of dubious quality. The state, however, decided to recognise these qualifications and thus these graduates achieved similar rights for employment as graduates in Greek institutions (Pedagogical Academies as they then were). Today there are 7,000 graduates from such institutions working in Greek primary schools.

After 1986, when greater numbers of students were accepted in university departments for training as primary teachers (part of a general policy of increasing university students), it was inevitable that the profession would be hit by unemployment. In 1985 there were 8,657 students enrolled in the Pedagogical Academies and in 1991 the corresponding number was 18,060. Indeed, the first

waiting list of primary teachers searching for employment appeared in 1986 and it has been increasing ever since. It is now more or less generally admitted that 'in any event teachers who are waiting for a job must be retrained after ten or fifteen years' (Bouzakis 1992: 29).

*FIGURE 5: The increase in unemployed primary teachers*



It is obvious from the above that the current situation in the area of primary teachers reflects the same problems that Greek Higher Education faces in general. Inappropriate planning and policies have resulted in a system which cannot claim success in the achievement of basic educational goals. As the situation continues to deteriorate, the need for a more efficient and effective intervention on behalf of the state is now acute. Such information is vital to place the following research into perspective.

### **Statistical analysis of the characteristics of PTD students**

This paper is seeking to understand the individual demand for Primary Teachers Departments (PTDs) of Greek universities. In short, what factors influence students choosing to study in these departments? It is the writers' belief that only the understanding and appreciation of the individual demand for the PTDs can equip planners and policy-makers to produce relevant and effective policies in the area of higher education as a whole.

This section attempts to expose individual demand for PTDs in Greece, by examining the various characteristics that distinguish the PTD students in Greece. As has already been noted, such characteristics touch upon the socio-economic background of the students, as well as their schooling and the broad areas of disciplines which they choose to follow in their last year of schooling.

First year primary teaching students were sampled in 1993, in three institutions. One hundred and ninety questionnaires were returned from the three departments, representing a 61% response. Thirty six responses emanated from the PTD of University of Aegean in Rhodes (representing 51% of registered student for primary training), seventy responses came from the University of Patras (72% of the intake) while eighty two derived from the University of Salonica (58.6%). The sample represents 20.65% of the total number of first year students undertaking primary teaching in Greek universities (920) and an average of 59.4% of first year students in the three institutions targeted.

As it can be observed in Table 1 the sample consisted of 33 male and 154 female students. Table 2 indicates the appropriate percentage of each gender in relation to total student numbers studying at PTDs.

TABLE 1: Gender of the respondents

	Frequency	%
Male	33	17.4
Female	154	82.4
N.A.	3	0.2

TABLE 2: Distribution of students in PTDs (1989-90)

	Male	Female
Total	1652	7674
%	17.7	82.3

The above figures also indicate that the sample represented quite accurately the whole population under consideration, as relevant statistics concerning the students in the PTDs. The sample confirms the general trend of female interest in primary education. The data is supported by trends in other OECD countries: in France, for instance, 71.3% of primary teachers are female, in Italy the figure is 88.9%, while in the UK it is 78.4% (OECD, 1990).

## The socio-economic background of the students

### *Parental level of education*

Table 3 indicates clear patterns of education levels of respondents' fathers.

TABLE 3: *Level of education of respondents' fathers*

Level of education	Frequency	%
Illiterate/some primary education	10	5.3
Primary school graduate	69	36.3
Lower secondary school	26	13.7
Upper secondary school	30	15.8
Lower technical school	3	1.6
Middle technical school	8	4.2
Upper technical school	9	4.7
Pedagogical / PE Academies	6	3.2
Other non-University Higher Education	2	1.1
University Degree	21	11.1
Post-graduate education	5	2.6
Missing	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

From the comparison of these figures with those presented earlier in the paper, one can assume that families, with low educational levels, continue to be the source of recruitment for future primary teachers. This is further confirmed when the level of education of the mothers of the students is examined (Table 4).

It is obvious from all this data that the vast majority of the students come from families of very low educational levels. Indeed, it is worth noting that sixty respondents (34.7%) come from families where both mother and father have only had a primary school education. Undoubtedly, there is an implicit ambition to assume greater educational prestige than their parents.

The examination of the data concerning the parental level of education reveals that there is a very specific family educational background from which the PTD

students derive. In order to make the picture clearer, the examination of parental occupation is now necessary. Such an examination will show whether there is also a general trend in family occupational backgrounds. The combination of the information concerning education and occupation of the family should allow us to identify the possible social origins of the PTD students.

### *Parental occupation*

Table 5 indicates that most of the students studying to become teachers derive from a certain economic background which is indicated by the parental occupation and, more specifically, by the work of the father. A considerable number of students (41.1%) recorded that their fathers were either farmers (13.7%) or workers, skilled or unskilled, (27.4%). Only 4.2% of the students' fathers were employed in scientific or managerial professions.

TABLE 4: Level of education of respondents' mothers

Mother's education	Frequency	%
Illiterate/some primary education	14	7.4
Primary school graduate	84	44.2
Lower secondary school	27	14.2
Upper secondary school	29	15.3
Lower technical school	3	1.6
Middle technical school	3	1.6
Upper technical school	1	0.5
Pedagogical / PE Academies	8	4.2
Other non-University		
Higher Education	6	3.2
University Degree	12	6.3
Post-graduate education	0	0
Missing	3	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

In the 'other' category, the following data was listed: army officers (4), priests (5), policemen (4), self-employed (4), retired persons (3) and unemployed (1).

There are some interesting points that can be observed from the above table:

- It is quite clear that PTD students derived from the lower and middle socio-economic groups of the Greek society. According to the sample, the percentage of students that emanated from such groups (civil servants, employed in the 'services', teachers, farmers and workers) was 71.1%.
- The percentage of PTD students who come from teaching families is quite low. (8.9%).

From the above it can be assumed that teaching as a profession is still a step in the social ladder, a chance for the offsprings of families enjoying relatively low status in Greek society, to 'escape' from that position.

The analysis of the data concerning occupation of mothers (Table 6) does not alter that picture, as most of them (117) are housewives, implying that the only source of income in the families under examination derives from the occupation of the father. It is interesting to note that, according to the OECD (1990), only 35.9% of the labour force in Greece is women. Furthermore, according to the national statistics (1988) only 35.1% of the women are 'active' in terms of employment. The figures below, therefore, highlight that the high percentage of mothers as housewives among the respondents, is in accordance with national figures.

TABLE 5: Occupation of fathers of PTD students

Occupation	Frequency	%
Scientific profession	7	3.7
Managerial position	1	0.5
Civil service	19	10.0
Other services	21	11.1
Teachers	17	8.9
Farmers	26	13.7
Skilled/unskilled workers	52	27.4
Merchants/shop-owners	19	10.0
Other	24	12.6
non stated	4	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>



TABLE 6: Occupation of respondents' mothers

Occupation	Frequency	%
Scientific profession	5	2.6
Managerial position	0	0
Civil service	17	8.9
Other services	12	6.3
Teachers	13	6.8
Farmers	2	1.1
Skilled/unskilled workers	7	3.7
Merchants/shop-owners	0	0
Other	8	4.2
Housewives	117	61.6
Missing	9	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100</b>

Frangoudaki (1985) and Kassimati (1991) claim that higher social groups 'favour' studies that lead to 'free' professions (such as managerial and scientific occupations), whereas lower social classes ones are oriented towards studies that lead to either the civil service or other state employment. It seems, therefore, that educational, and, therefore occupational decisions, are strongly influenced by social parameters, with the family being the most dominant.

In order to complete the socio-economic portrait of the PTD students it is necessary to consider location of residence and the size of their family. Previous research indicates that these factors affect educational choice and occupation. The writers wished to confirm such claims. The research demonstrated that there is now a clear tendency for PTD students to come from an urban environment (72 %) with 9% emanating from towns and 19% from villages. It is also interesting to note that students mainly derive from relatively small families with 77.4 % of the sample having no more than two siblings.

Having analysed the first set of questions, one could clearly identify the socio-economic back ground of the PTD students in Greece. It is apparent that the Primary Teachers Training departments are fed, to a very large extent, by very specific parts of Greek society: *small, urban 'working class' families, with both parents having relatively low educational levels.* Additionally, it should be stated that the increasing feminisation of the profession is obvious among the first year

students of the PTDs. All the above characteristics define the target group for possible policy interventions.

### *Secondary observations*

A closer examination of the data acquired reveals other interesting points. If the place of residence and the paternal level of education are cross-tabulated, it becomes clear that the vast majority of the students living in villages or towns (41/52 or 76.9%) had fathers who had not completed secondary education (Table 7). At a national level the percentage of people living in the rural areas who have not completed secondary education is 70.7%. (Kassimati 1991).

TABLE 7: Parental education (regional analysis)

Occupation	Rural Areas		Urban Areas	
	father	mother	father	mother
Illiterate/some primary education	4	5	5	8
Primary education	29	32	40	51
Lower secondary education	9	10	28	23
Upper secondary education	4	3	25	26
Non-University Higher Ed.	3	2	14	13
University	3	—	23	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>133</b>

It is therefore possible to propose that policy interventions should be aiming at students living in rural areas, whose parents have not completed secondary education.

### *The school and the exams*

Having identified the socio-economic area from which the PTD students are most likely to come, one should try to be even more specific and distinguish some other characteristics of the students, in order to form a clearer initial picture of the individual demand for these departments: the type of school from which these students graduated (state or private) and the stream in which they pursued their last (preparatory) year in school.

In Greece there are 62 private secondary (fee-paying) schools (taking 5.6% of the total pupil population). These schools are evidently more traditional and more prestigious (Greek Ministry of Education, unpublished statistics). The fact that these schools are fee-paying makes them, to a large extent, non-affordable for low-income families. In our sample of PTD students the representation of private school graduates is much lower than the national level, as Table 8 shows.

TABLE 8: *Type of secondary attended by first year PTD students*

Type of school	Frequency	%
Private	5	2.6
State	184	97.4
N.A.	1	0.5

97.4% of the respondents graduated from state schools with only 2.6% from private schools (less than half the national percentage) providing further confirmation of the origins of PTD students.

Students in Greece can follow one of four curriculum 'routes' during their last year at school, according to their areas of interest. Their choice determines the broad area of disciplines that they will eventually follow for their tertiary education. It has already been stated that the respondents come from specific curriculum routes (Science and Maths), rather than all four of them.

TABLE 9: *Curriculum route pursued by PTD students in school*

Route followed	Frequency	%
1st	2	1.1
2nd	1	0.5
3rd	131	68.9
4th	55	28.9
N.A.	1	0.5

Table 9 shows that almost all (97.8%) the respondents came from the third or fourth curriculum route, or, in other words, from the routes that lead to humanities (route 3) or to studies related to business and economics (route 4). It could

be assumed, therefore, that these two streams are the ones that feed almost exclusively the PTDs. In other words students who end up in these departments are oriented either towards humanities or towards business.

It is interesting to notice the differences with the national distribution of students according to the curriculum routes that they followed in the 1992-93 academic year.

*TABLE 10: Curriculum route followed by final year students (1993)*

<b>Route followed</b>	<b>%</b>
1st	43
2nd	8
3rd	22
4th	27

*(Source: Greek Ministry of Education, Unpublished Statistics)*

The above table provides a sharper focus in our attempt to understand those who choose primary teaching as a profession. In short, apart from the specific socio-economic background identified in the initial set of questions, there is also another characteristic of the PTD students: their area of academic interest, declared by their choice of the four curriculum routes, which leads them to pursue training in one of Greece's Teachers Training Departments.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to focus on one area of primary teacher training in Greece through examinations of social origins, characteristics and qualifications of entrants to primary teaching and its role in social mobility. Other vital issues such as the inadequacy of national planning, manifested in the fact that vast numbers of trained teachers wait years to take up a position in schools due to the imbalance between supply and demand, will be the theme for a future paper. This research has shown that despite future unemployment prospects, primary teaching is seen as one way of rising from the lower social echelons. This paper has deliberately not focused on other choices currently available to students, although indeed some mention has been made above. This theme will be investigated in a future paper.

There are clearly ambiguities, conflicts and misapprehensions in the pursuit of training primary teachers. Strong vocational elements and commitment to the teaching profession are subordinated by the directed curriculum route and parental ambitions. There is clearly a need for a realignment of education at secondary level which should provide greater flexibility and opportunity of choice. Furthermore, the government should confront the fact that, despite training, there is little likelihood that student teachers will succeed in attaining a position in the short-term. A reassessment of the whole process of teacher training is evidently required while, more significantly perhaps, the Greek government needs to adopt a more creative and strategic approach to educational planning as whole.

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