

The link between secondary technical /vocational education and the labour market in Cyprus

Maria Eliophotou* and Elias Margadjis

Abstract

The paper aims at investigating the link between secondary technical/vocational education and the labour market in Cyprus. Specifically, we examine the following: the main problems faced by graduates of technical/vocational education in their transition from education to the labour market; the link between knowledge and skills acquired at school, and knowledge and skills required at the workplace; the degree to which technical/vocational education succeeds in preparing graduates for the labour market; changes that can enhance the employment of technical/vocational education graduates and their success in the labour market. Data were collected from both experts and technical education graduates through qualitative research. Experts included key personnel of the Department of Technical and Vocational Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture and other officials in the area of technical/vocational education. Graduates of technical/vocational education were selected through criterion sampling based on their specialisations and their years of labour market experience. According to the findings, technical/vocational education graduates enjoy a relatively smooth transition from education to the labour market, with short periods of unemployment, underemployment or employment in non-related fields of study. Problems faced by technical/vocational education graduates after their employment included the lack of adequate preparation due to curriculum deficiencies and, to some extent, competition from foreign workers. The link between skills and knowledge acquired at school, and skills and knowledge required at the workplace was considered to be satisfactory even though the role of curriculum weaknesses was again highlighted. Respondents believed that the curriculum emphasised theory at the expense of practice and was not informed by recent developments to the greatest possible extent. Both officials and graduates were positive in their evaluation of technical/vocational education in Cyprus. However, they identified several weaknesses and provided suggestions for enhancing the link between technical/vocational education and the labour market. These included more training for graduates after labour market entry, changes in the curriculum and available

* Corresponding author address: Department of Education, University of Cyprus, P.O. Box 20537, 1678 Nicosia, Cyprus, E-mail: mekmen@ucy.ac.cy.

infrastructure, and greater focus on student preferences. The findings are used as the basis for policy recommendations in the area of technical/vocational education in Cyprus.

Keywords: technical/vocational education, labour market, employment, educational policy