

# The Effectiveness of the Integrationist Approach System in the Promotion of Sensitive Social Groups in the Job Market

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## Abstract

Nowadays individuals belonging to sensitive social groups face serious problems in their professional and social integration, due to their particular characteristics and multidimensional deficiencies in education, training and their promotion in the job market.

The present work attempts to investigate the effectiveness of the integrationist approach system in the promotion of sensitive social groups in the job market. In the first part, the term sensitive social groups is analyzed, as well as the significance of integrationist approach in the integration of these special demographic groups in the job market, through their participation in Continuing Vocational Training programs. Meanwhile, the term effectiveness and quality is semantically clarified in the frame of Continuing Vocational Training programs.

In the second part, the results of a research are presented. The research was realized in individuals that belong to sensitive social groups and which participated to Continuing Vocational Training programs in Achaia, Greece, from 2004 to 2009. The paper is completed with conclusions and their discussion.

**Keywords:** Social groups, Vocational training programs, Job market, Effectiveness, Quality

## 1. Introduction

Social exclusion constitutes a multidimensional problem. Individuals that belong to social exclusion groups face multiple problems which most of the times are educational, social and psychological (Komninou, 1999). Simultaneously, they may face lack of formal qualifications which often includes lack of basic skills, functional illiteracy, lack of vocational qualifications, lack of self-confidence, insecurity, daily living problems, lack of day nurseries, prejudices etc (Giannopoulou, 2008).

The complex problems of unemployment and social exclusion that people in modern societies face require a *multidimensional approach*, which demands the broadening of adult training objectives (Rogers, 1999).

As Vergidis mentions (Vergidis, 2005), in the society of Knowledge and Technology, lack of education and vocational training has unfavorable consequences for the minority and marginalized groups which "remain abandoned behind the general course of society". This means that individuals should acquire a minimal body of knowledge and develop a number of skills in order to have a place in the job market (Vergidis, 2005). Obviously, individuals belonging to sensitive social groups should acquire new knowledge, enrich those already acquired, develop skills so that they are capable to meet the requirements of modern era. This role mainly belongs to the Centers of Vocational Training (CVT) which provide pre-vocational and vocational training as well as a complete system of services that includes Accompanying Supporting Services and actions that help individuals find a place in the job market. Thus, educational gaps should be filled via pre-vocational and vocational training.

Many adult education theorists in the field of sensitive social groups suggest that psychosocial support services should operate simultaneously with pre-vocational and vocational training. They could contribute in the activation of trainees, prevent their early departure from continuing vocational training programs and thus facilitate their smoother accession in the job market and the wider social environment (Moschos, 1999, Tsimpoukli, 1999, Komninou, 1999).

Consequently, confrontation of social exclusion is not limited to classic interventions as vocational training and professional orientation, but requires multidimensional and complete interventions involving not only the particular groups but also the social, political, institutional and cultural environment. Moreover, integration of these individuals in the job market requires the engagement of all parties involved and particularly the active participation of individuals themselves (Tsimpoukli, 1999).

## 2. Sensible Social Groups

According to Katsoulis, sensible social groups are defined as groups that face the phenomenon of social exclusion, because of specific *external characteristics concerning their culture, the deviating behavior or even other particularities which nowadays seem to threaten the cohesion of society*. Particularly in periods of economic crisis, social exclusion threatens mainly those who experience long-lasting unemployment, young unemployed people, older men, unskilled workers, women. It is more threatening for all kind of national, racial, cultural and other minorities, such as repatriated immigrants, foreign workers, persons with special needs, drug addicts – released from prison, gypsies, political refugees, in particular *women and immigrants*. These groups are excluded from the national way of life and progressively they are marginalized because either they are excluded from the job market or they are unable to (re)enter (Katsoulis, 1999).

In the present work, as Sensible Social Groups we define those social groups which *are excluded from the job market* due to factors and conditions that concern lack of basic vocational qualifications and skills, since these groups are not sufficiently integrated in the educational system and in the system of Continuing Vocational Training. Besides, as far as these social groups are concerned, we observe quantitative and qualitative discrepancy between offer and demand in the job market, deprivation of personal freedom, dependence on drugs, social stigmatization, discriminations and stereotype prejudices, mainly due to cultural, linguistic and religious particularities (Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, 1998, Kokkos, 1999).

According to Decision 109158/20-4-99 of the Ministry of Labor, the following demographic groups belong to the category of sensible social groups:

- A. Individuals with special needs and specifically with kinetic problems, sensory organs problems and mental hysteresis.
- B. Repatriated immigrants - Immigrants - Refugees.
- C. Jailed, Released, Young offenders and Young people threatened by deviating behavior.
- D. Ex drug addicts - Individuals with HIV.
- E. Heads of one-parent families, mainly women.
- F. Individuals living in geographically distant mountainous or islander regions.
- G. Individuals with linguistic, cultural and religious particularities.
- H. Unemployed aged 45-64.

## 3. Integration and incorporation of Sensitive Social Groups in society

There are three main approaches in the confrontation of social exclusion (Levitas, 2004, OECD, 2001). Initially, with an *"integrationist approach"* in which **employment** is perceived as the main factor of social incorporation, through the income gained, the strengthening of identity and the reinforcement of self-esteem that result from work, as well as through the networks created when working.

More specifically, researches have shown that employment is not related only to income, but also to the acquisition of social networks and the sense of self-esteem. The terms "employment opportunities" and "employment" are stressed and it is an individual responsibility and life obligation of each working individual to acquire and maintain marketable skills. These come to substitute the full time job and job security as a social responsibility and main obligation of the social state. In this approach, it is considered that the existence of employment and of employment opportunities offered by the market, the investors and the State (Ministry of Labor, Organization for the Occupation of the Workforce) resolves directly and completely the problems of poverty and social incorporation.

On the other hand, *"poverty approach"* attributes the reasons of exclusion in the low income and the lack of material goods. However, poverty factor cannot lead to social exclusion, provided that there are certain factors they may interrupt this process, such as state benefits or the economic support from family members.

Finally, *"underclass approach"* faces excluded individuals as individuals which deviate from virtuous and cultural models and unwritten rules of behavior, demonstrating a poverty culture or a culture deprived of any dynamics. Thus, these individuals are considered responsible for their own poverty as well as for spreading this poverty to future generations.

The present work focuses on the *first approach* of social exclusion, as deprivation of work and lack of "employment" have led sensitive social groups, such as immigrants from the former USSR, gypsies, residents of

mountainous regions, unemployed older than 45 years, to serious problems of economic integration, rendering the economic factor the fundamental cause of social exclusion. *Economic factors of social exclusion* include: long intervals of unemployment, difficulty in finding a job, underemployment, low prestige and income job, higher percentage of unemployed comparing to that of local people, small number of employed women, low rate of self-employment and participation in the economically active population of individuals that were students before the immigration (Kasimati, 1998).

Aiming at the growth of employment and the assistance of Sensitive Social Groups integration in the job market, the Greek State aided by the European Union and the structural funds planned and realized Continuing Vocational Training programs (Vergidis and Karalis, 2008).

An important number of these programs is addressed to individuals that belong to sensitive social groups. The system of integrationist approach attempts to provide participants with general and special knowledge and skills, as well as to help them integrate in the job market. Its final objective is to assist their best integration in the labor and social web (Gendron, 2001).

#### 4. The meaning of the Integrationist Approach

The integrationist approach in sensitive social groups training is considered by many social researchers as the best approach when confronting the problem of social exclusion that these social groups face (Allen, 1988, Commission, 2000).

It is suggested that integrationist approach should include *vocational training in combination with accompanying support actions for the unemployed as well as for the sensitization of society towards the problems that sensitive groups face* (Rompolis *et.al.*, 1999). The integrationist approach can be successfully realized in the frame of integrationist programs.

A program is considered an integrationist program when it includes a beam of multidimensional actions and actions that complete each other and are capable to assist individuals and groups that are excluded or threatened by exclusion to integrate/reenter in the formal job market (Giannopoulou, 2008).

These actions are:

1. At least one (1) action of Meter 1 (prevocational – vocational training)
2. Propulsive Employment Actions (Meter 2)
3. Accompanying Support Services (Meter 3)

As **prevocational and vocational training** (Meter 1) is considered every structured training process which aims at the upgrade or even the acquisition of special knowledge, skills and qualifications of the population targeted and which exploits the use of suitable training methods and supporting material (Ministerial Decision 109734/16.10.1998).

**Prevocational training** constitutes the preparation phase for the program targeted groups and it aims at the resolution of basic discrepancies between educative and vocational qualifications. It also aims to increase these groups' capability to participate in the training and/or in the processes of integration in the job market.

Prevocational training has to do with confrontation of illiteracy problems, learning of Greek language, growth of natural and social skills as well as professional orientation, development of skills and faculties and generally the configuration of elementary conditions necessary for the integration of an individual in the job market (Komninou, 1999).

**Vocational training** aims at the immediate acquisition and the upgrade of special knowledge concerning a concrete cognitive object, so that the targeted group shows skills and qualifications essential for the integration or re-integration in the job market. Vocational training is connected to the acquisition of vocational skills in subjects adapted to the particularities of each group as well as of the local job market. Vocational training is not considered a major theme for groups that have high educational qualifications. On the contrary, in these cases the program should be flexible and limited to prevocational training.

As **Propulsive Employment Actions** (Meter 2) are considered the actions aiming at the direct or indirect support of the targeted group's integration in the job market. Propulsive Employment Actions stress the induction and the effective operation of a system mediating between job offer and demand, which locates and "connects" these two poles. This action is completed by the creation of a frame of collaboration among employers, the state, the Local government, the Organization for the Occupation of the Work Force (O.A.E.D.) and the Employment Centers (K.P.A.), which attempt an individualized approach of the unemployed. This effort

is strengthened by the subsidy offered by the Organization for the Occupation of the Work Force (O.A.E.D.) to young self-employed people and to those creating new places of work.

As **Accompanying Support Services** (Meter 3) are considered the actions accompanying prevocational and vocational training or propulsive employment actions and function supportively to assist the integration or re-integration of the targeted groups in the job market. Accompanying Support Services include complete services to support individuals facing particular difficulties. At the same time, in the frame of every integrationist program, there are actions informing the public about the problems that sensitive groups face and actions aiming at the sensitization and activation of the public. There are also actions aiming at the activation - sensitization of the targeted group itself (Komninou, 1999).

### 5. The meaning of effectiveness and quality in Continuing Vocational Training programs

The rapid developments that were realized in the field of education during the last decade influenced considerably adult education, bringing in the limelight of educational policy meanings as: *quality, effectiveness, efficiency, qualitative control, guarantee of quality, quality criteria and indexes*.

The meaning of effectiveness constitutes a report element in the effort to upgrade the services offered and to guarantee the quality of learning in Continuing Vocational Training programs. There is a great number of evaluations in bibliography which examine parameters such as planning and offering the training program, administrative structure of the training organization, technological infrastructure, quality of training material, trainers' role, access in electronic services, economic efficiency and evaluation processes of the training program (Patel, 2004).

The integrationist approach programs are dynamic and complex systems with a diversity of organizational, administrative, training and technological components. Thus, every change in one of the system components affects all the others and the system itself. This means that an effectiveness research of such a system should take into account all or at least its basic components and the way they affect each other, as well as the external factors that may influence the system (Fragoulis, 2008). Consequently, there are many factors that contribute to the effectiveness of an integrationist program. The quality of processes contributes to the program effectiveness and particular significance is attributed to the content quality and the training processes planning that render the achievement of training objectives effective (Storr and Hurst, 2001).

Basic **criteria** of a program effectiveness are according to Chasapis the following:

- *knowledge acquisition, skills development or even the formation of attitudes*, as they are mentioned in the program objectives, for the group that participated in the program activities and/or
- *the improvement of professional, economic or social place or even the change of behavior of those individuals* that participated in the program activities, as a main result of their participation (Chasapis, 2000).

The **quality** of the programs constitutes a multidimensional and complex meaning, connected to the total of their basic characteristics and consequently is not susceptible to a one-track and general definition (Chasapis, 2000). Thus, quality level of a program is determined by the correspondence of its basic characteristics to definite models and specifications. Consequently, the quality of the program in the frame of the training organization policy, can be defined with reference to:

- **the content, means and methods of training.** In this case the content sufficiency, the effectiveness of training methods, the appropriateness of training means, the trainers' sufficiency are of great interest, that is the effectiveness optimization of the training and learning processes of a vocational program.
- **the opportunities of vocational training offered to special population groups** in order to cover certain social needs via a program.
- **the satisfaction of interested "customers".** In this case the vocational training offered should correspond to trainees' or to their employers' needs and applications, that is to cover the specific needs.
- **the effectiveness of planning and realization actions of a project.** In this case the interest is on the performance optimization of individuals and functional units that belong to the training organization (administrative approach).

According to Jarvis (Fragoulis, 2007) the term quality in Vocational Training Programs is many-sided and its meaning can be interpreted and used according to the social, economic and political frame.

Maxwell ends up to the following six dimensions of quality in Continuing Vocational Training (Storr and Hurst, 2001):

1. *Effectiveness* - For example, did the organization achieve the expected benefit for the individual and the population? Which is the result?
2. *Acceptability* - Do services satisfy consumer requirements? How well does the provision match service needs?
3. *Efficiency* - Was there any waste of resources while offering somebody services at the expense of somebody else? How is it possible to compare the unit cost to the unit cost of somebody else?
4. *Accessibility* - Was there a possibility that unjustifiable time and distance limit blocked services? Did consumers have the services required when they needed them?
5. *Equity* - Is there fair distribution for the whole population? Are individuals and groups treated equally?
6. *Relevance* - Who needs the benefit or the process, the population or the individual? How well does provision match service needs?

Designing of training traditionally had one-way direction: trainers as well as coordinators and heads of training decided about the training content and method, when according to Giannakourou and Chalas, the trainers' views of the trainees needs were considerably different from the views supported by the trainees' managers. The qualitative dimension of training reverses this situation and stresses the employees' real needs, as they are formed according to the aims of their professional roles which are strengthened and broadened (Chalas, 2002).

Prerequisites for quality guarantee in Continuing Vocational Training are the following (Gonzou, 1999):

- Conditions should be realistic and allow creativity development, which makes necessary the presence of a facilitator and the existence of motives
- knowledge should be collective
- The need to learn exists instead of the "arrogance" of knowing everything
- Development of networking and new ideas should be promoted.

## 6. Research Aims and Questions

The present research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the integrationist approach in the education and promotion of sensitive social groups in the job market, in the frame of Continuing Vocational Training Programs, that took place in Centers of Vocational Training of Achaia Prefecture from 2004 to 2008.

The research questions are the following:

- 1) The reasons that lead participants to Continuing Vocational Training Programs depend on their demographic characteristics (questions 7-8).
- 2) The participants' opinions on the effectiveness of the integrationist approach in the frame of Continuing Vocational Training Programs depend on their demographic characteristics (questions 9-12, 15, 17-19).
- 3) The trainees' satisfaction degree of their participation in integrationist approaches of Continuing Vocational Training Programs depend on their demographic characteristics (questions 21-23).

The sample of our research consisted of 140 subjects, which belonged to sensitive social groups and participated in Continuing Vocational Training Programs, that took place in Public and Private Centers of Vocational Training (K.E.K.) in Achaia Prefecture from 2004 to 2008.

The *demographic* sample distribution is the following: 30 individuals (21,5%) were repatriated immigrants, 25 individuals (17,8%) were from North Ipirus, 15 (10,7%) were gypsies, 10 (7,14%) were released from prison, 20 individuals (14,3%) were residents of mountainous or geographically distant regions, 20 individuals (14,3%) were long period unemployed aged 45-64, while 20 individuals (14,3%) were heads of one-parent families.

The sample distribution as far as *sex* is concerned is the following: 56 subjects were men (40%) and 84 women (60%). The *age* distribution is the following: 42 individuals (30%) were 25-34 years old, 22 individuals (15,7%) were 35-44 years old, 44 individuals (31,4%) were 45-54 years old, 32 (22,9%) were 55-64 years old. The distribution according to their *marital status* is the following: 79 individuals (56,4%) were married, 26 individuals (18,6%) were single, 35 (25%) were divorced.

The sample distribution concerning *their education level* was the following: 30 individuals (21,4%) had never gone to school, 36 individuals (25,7%) had not finished Primary School, 62 individuals (44,3%) had finished Primary School, while 12 (8,6%) had finished Secondary School.

**Insert Figure 1 Here**

The research subjects were grouped and studied in two major categories according to their labor situation: a) occasionally employed: 47 subjects (33,6%), b) unemployed: 93 subjects (66,4%).

**Insert Figure 2 Here****7. Results**

The following results came out after one-variable and two-variable analysis of the answers given to the questionnaires distributed for the aims of the research:

The question "*Why you decided to participate to that particular program*" was answered as following: 40 subjects (28,6%) mentioned the acquisition of knowledge, 50 subjects (35,7%) in order to find a job, 25 subjects (17,9%) mentioned the development of skills, while 25 (17,8%) in order to enlarge their social environment. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) between the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,004$ ) and age ( $p = 0,02$ ).

**Insert Table 1 Here**

Regarding the "*degree the training program responded to your expectations*", 95 subjects (67,9%) answered too much and very much, while 45 subjects (32,1%) answered moderately. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) among the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,04$ ), age ( $p = 0,02$ ) and the education level ( $p = 0,05$ ).

Regarding the question "*How useful you consider the phase of prevocational training*", 65 subjects (46,4%) answered that it was too useful, 35 subjects (25%) mentioned that it was very useful, while it was considered as useful by 40 subjects (28,6%). The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) among the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,04$ ), age ( $p = 0,02$ ) and the education level ( $p = 0,03$ ). **Insert Table 2 Here**

Regarding the question "*How useful you consider the phase of vocational training*", 70 subjects (50%) answered that it was too useful, 54 subjects (38,6%) mentioned that it was very useful, while it was considered useful by 16 subjects (11,4%). The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) between the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,04$ ) and age ( $p = 0,05$ ).

**Insert Table 3 Here**

Regarding the question "*How useful you consider the propulsive employment phase*", 97 subjects (69,3%) found it was too useful, 33 subjects (23,6%) found it very useful, while it was considered useful by 10 subjects (7,1%).

**Insert Table 4 Here**

Regarding the question "*How useful you consider the phase of Accompanying Support Services*", 64 subjects (45,7%) answered that it was too useful, 42 subjects (30,%) mentioned that it was very useful, while it was considered useful by 34 subjects (24,3%). The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) among the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,03$ ), age ( $p = 0,04$ ) and the education level ( $p = 0,05$ ).

**Insert Table 5 Here**

Regarding the "*Degree the participation in the program helped the acquisition of theoretical knowledge required for the entry in the job market*" 75 subjects (53,6%) answered positively to a very high degree, 30 subjects (21,4%) answered moderately, while 35 subjects (25%) declared a minimum degree. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) between the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,04$ ) and age ( $p = 0,02$ ).

Regarding the "*Degree the participation in the program helped the acquisition of the practical knowledge required for your entry in the job market*" 62 subjects (44,3%) answered positively to a very high degree, 25 subjects (17,8%) answered positively to a high degree, 32 subjects (22,9%) answered moderately, while 21 (15%) declared a minimum degree. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) between the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,04$ ) and education level ( $p = 0,03$ ).

**Insert Table 6 Here**

The question "*Do you consider that Employment Promotion staff facilitated your integration in the job market*" was answered positively by 127 subjects (90,7%), while 13 (9,3%) answered negatively.

The individuals that answered *positively* justified their opinion mentioning the following methods: 37 subjects (29,1%) mentioned job finding, 35 subjects (27,6%) mentioned advisory support, 35 subjects (27,6%) mentioned the benefit of information sharing, while contact with institutions was mentioned by 20 subjects (15,7%).

**Insert Table 7 Here**

The question "*Did you meet difficulties during your participation at the program*", was answered positively by 116 subjects (82,9%), while 24 (17,1%) answered negatively.

The subjects that answered positively mentioned the following difficulties: 43 subjects (37,1%) mentioned family obligations, 34 subjects (29,3%) mentioned lack of time, 23 subjects (19,8%) mentioned weakness in the use of Greek language, while 16 subjects (13,8%) mentioned access difficulties. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) among the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,03$ ), age ( $p = 0,04$ ) and education level ( $p = 0,05$ ).

#### **Insert Table 8 Here**

The question "*Do you consider that Accompanying Support Services staff helped you face your difficulties*", was answered positively by 106 subjects (75,7%), while 34 (24,3%) answered negatively.

The individuals that answered positively mentioned that the following methods helped them face their difficulties: 45 individuals (42,5%) mentioned psychological support - counseling, 36 individuals (34%) mentioned information sharing, while 25 (23,5%) mentioned vocational orientation. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) between the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,04$ ) and age ( $p = 0,003$ ).

#### **Insert Table 9 Here**

Regarding the question "*How would you characterize your participation at the program*", 75 subjects (53,6%) referred to it as really very important, 25 subjects (17,9%) referred to it as effective,

while 40 subjects (28,5%) mentioned it was satisfying. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) between the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,03$ ) and age ( $p = 0,004$ ).

The question "*Would you suggest to a relative or a friend to participate to a similar program*", was answered positively by 126 subjects (90%), while 14 (10%) answered negatively.

The individuals that answered positively justified their opinion as following: 43 individuals (34,1%) mentioned job finding, 51 individuals (40,4%) mentioned social inclusion and 32 individuals (25,5%) referred to skills development. The two-variable analysis showed a statistical importance ( $\alpha < 0,05$ ) among the subjects' sex ( $p = 0,02$ ), age ( $p = 0,003$ ) and education level ( $p = 0,003$ ).

#### **Insert Table 10 Here**

The question "*Which changes would you suggest in order to improve the program*" was answered as follows: the majority of repatriated immigrants and people from North Ipirus (90,2%) wish that particular emphasis should be given in teaching the Greek language, (92,4%) of gypsies and people released from prison wish that particular emphasis should be given to the accompanying supporting services, as well as to action of employment promotion, (87,4%) of the residents of mountainous regions and of people who are unemployed for a long period wish that particular emphasis should be given in vocational training as well as in accompanying supporting services. Finally, all individuals who are heads of one-parent families wish that particular emphasis should be given in vocational training, as well as in acts that help them find a job.

### **8. Conclusions - Discussion**

The research results show that all subjects, no matter what their demographic characteristics are, ascertain that the integrationist approach system is effective for their integration in the job market.

Almost all of them consider that the program corresponded to their expectations. This opinion is mainly expressed by women, younger individuals and individuals with lower education level. These opinions are interpreted if we take into consideration researches reporting that individuals with the above mentioned characteristics suffer more intensely from the consequences of social exclusion, than individuals belonging to other demographic categories (Giannopoulou, 2008).

Regarding the reasons that prompted the individuals to participate to Continuing Vocational Training programs, there were not observed important differentiations in their opinions, as all subjects, no matter what their demographic characteristics are, mention as basic reasons the following: a) knowledge acquisition, b) development of vocational skills, c) finding a job and d) broadening of their social environment. Moreover, they support that their participation to the particular program strongly assisted them towards this direction.

This opinion is interpreted if we take into consideration research results reporting that individuals threatened by social exclusion wish the broadening of their social environment aiming at their smoother integration in the labor and social web (Katsoulis, 1999). Additionally, women and younger trainees (individuals aged 25-34) wish to participate to Continuing Vocational Training programs. This is interpreted if we consider that the percentage of

women suffering the consequences of social exclusion is greater than that of men. The same happens to younger persons wishing their integration in the job market (Tsimpoukli, 1999).

The prevocational phase was characterized as very useful by a great number of trainees, mainly by women, gypsies and individuals with low educational level. This opinion is interpreted if we take into consideration that women, elder individuals who in their majority have a very low educational level, as well as gypsies, expect to acquire during prevocational training basic knowledge, mainly literacy and basic training, so that they are in a position to participate to the following phases of the program and complete them successfully.

The phase of training was characterized as too useful and very useful by the majority of participants. Women and younger individuals suggested improvements so that the program quality could be increased. They suggested for example diagnosis of their particular training needs and designing the program units according to them as well as to the needs of the job market. Individuals with lower level of education suggested improvements in the practical sections. They wish they had more practical exercise and less theoretical knowledge, since the previous lack of education does not allow them to participate successfully to the theoretical part of the program, to learn effectively and to seek a job relative to the subject of their training.

The phase of Accompanying Supporting Services was characterized as very important and too important by almost all the participants. Particularly positive comments were made by repatriated immigrants, women who were head of one-parent families, individuals released from prison, younger people, as well as individuals with low level of education. All of them, in the frame of Accompanying Supporting Services, found important help provided by experienced staff and they faced problems and difficulties successfully, which they would have found difficult to face by themselves. Individuals of the above mentioned demographic groups suffer more intensely the consequences of social exclusion and Accompanying Supporting Services function as a mechanism which softens the problems they face in the family and in a social level (Giannopoulou, 2008, Fragoulis *et al.*, 2008).

The research subjects in their majority characterized as effective the collaboration and communication they had with the employment promotion staff.

It seems that the employment promotion sector functioned satisfactorily, as all trainees were informed of the possibilities they had in order to make use of subsidized programs of finding a job. The research results showed that certain demographic groups, as young law offenders and heads of one-parent families, need more frequent actions of advisory and vocational orientation aiming at their integration in the educational system and the completion of their basic education (Tsimpoukli, 1999).

As far as the integration in the job market is concerned, the research results were satisfactory, as at the completion of the program the majority of subjects was absorbed in the local job market. At this point it should be mentioned that in all these results the subsidized programs of labor employment provided by the Organization for the Occupation of the Work Force (O.A.E.D.) had an important role, in combination with the actions made by the people working for the Centers of Vocational Training (K.E.K.), aiming to inform the trainees as well as the employers of the possibilities and occasions provided by the New Jobs Programs (Giannopoulou, 2008).

In regard to the difficulties faced by the trainees during their participation to the program, the differentiations observed concerning their demographic characteristics are interpreted if we consider that women carry more familial obligations than men and thus their spare time is limited compared to that of men. Moreover, individuals with lower level of education, repatriated immigrants and individuals from North Ipirus have difficulties in participating to all the program phases, because of their weakness in the use and comprehension of the Greek language.

As far as the participation to the program is concerned, the opinions expressed by the trainees are differentiated according to their demographic characteristics. Women and younger individuals wished they had more active participation in the process of the program realization, in order to gain the highest benefit. The opinions of these groups are interpreted if we take into consideration results of previous researches reporting that women and younger individuals wish to have a more active role than men during Continuing Vocational Training Programs (Fragoulis, 2009).

The trainees expressed their opinion concerning the suggestion to relatives or friends to participate in such a program. Their opinions are interpreted if we consider that women, younger persons and individuals with higher educational level recognize the importance of Continuing Vocational Training Programs. Individuals with the above mentioned characteristics support that their participation in these programs contributes to their effort to find a job, helps them acquire knowledge, develop skills and improve their integration in the social environment.

Relevant conclusions derived from a recent research that was realized with a group of trainees in Achaia Prefectoral Center of Vocational Training - NELE (Fragoulis, 2009).

Regarding the program improvements suggested by the participants, they are interpreted if we take into consideration that people belonging to sensitive social groups have different needs and characteristics and experience the consequences of social exclusion with different intensity and frequency.

Completing the presentation of the research conclusions, we are led to the ascertainment that all research questions are verified to an important degree. The subjects' differences in demographic characteristics influence their opinions concerning the reasons that lead to their participation in Continuing Vocational Training Programs. They also influence the effectiveness of these programs, as well as the satisfaction degree deriving from the participation in them.

## 9. Suggestions

The effective integrationist approach offered to the members of sensitive social groups requires a specialized diagnosis of their characteristics and needs. Designing and planning these training programs should be based on these groups' needs and special characteristics and the integrationist approach method should be properly exploited.

At this point it is essential to train the trainers and all the individuals involved in these programs (scientific and administrative personnel, Accompanying Supporting Services staff, employment promotion staff) and inform them of the particular characteristics and the problems that these special demographic groups face, concerning their integration in the job market. Then, individuals contributing to these programs will know in-depth the weaknesses and the problems of these particular demographic groups, they will be in a position to plan and realize interventions of such a form and content, that all resources (human and material) are exploited as best as possible. In this way, it is ensured that the integrationist approach system in the promotion of sensitive social groups in the job market will have the quality and effectiveness needed.

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### Ministerial Decisions

Ministerial Decision 109734/16-10-1998.

Ministerial Decision 109158/20-04-1999.

Table 1. Reasons of program participation

1.	KNOWLEDGE AQUISITION .....	28.6 %
2.	TO FIND A JOB .....	35.7 %
3.	DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS .....	17.9 %
4.	ENLARGEMENT OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT .....	17.8 %

Table 2. Usefulness of Prevocational Training

1.	TOO USEFUL.....	46.4 %
2.	VERY USEFUL .....	25.0 %
3.	USEFUL .....	28.6 %

Table 3. Usefulness of Vocational Training

1.	TOO USEFUL .....	50.0 %
2.	VERY USEFUL .....	38.6 %
3.	USEFUL .....	11.4 %

Table 4. Usefulness of propulsive employment phase

1.	TOO USEFUL .....	69.3 %
2.	VERY USEFUL .....	23.6 %
3.	USEFUL .....	7.1 %

Table 5. Usefulness of Accompanying Support Services

1.	TOO USEFUL .....	45.7 %
2.	VERY USEFUL .....	30.0 %
3.	USEFUL .....	24.3 %

Table 6. Degree of practical knowledge acquisition

1.	VERY HIGH DEGREE .....	44,3 %
2.	HIGH DEGREE .....	17,8 %
3.	MODERATELY.....	22,9 %
4.	MINIMUM DEGREE .....	15,0%

Table 7. Support methods used by the Employment Promotion Staff

1.	FINDING A JOB .....	29.1 %
2.	ADVISORY SUPPORT .....	27.6 %
3.	INFORMATION SHARING .....	27.6%
4.	CONTACT WITH INSTITUTIONS .....	15.7%

Table 8. Difficulties during the participation at the program

1.	FAMILY OBLIGATIONS .....	37.1 %
2.	LACK OF TIME .....	29.3 %
3.	WICKNESS IN THE USE OF GREEK LANGUAGE .....	19.8 %
4.	ACCESS DIFICULTIES .....	13.8 %

Table 9. Methods used to face difficulties during the participation at the program

1.	PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT – COUNCELLING .....	42.5 %
2.	INFORMATION SHARING .....	34.0 %
3.	VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION .....	23.5 %

Table 10. Reasons of participation to the program

1.	JOB FINDING.....	34.1 %
2.	SOCIAL INDUCTION .....	40.4 %
3.	SKILLS DEVELOPMENT .....	25.5 %

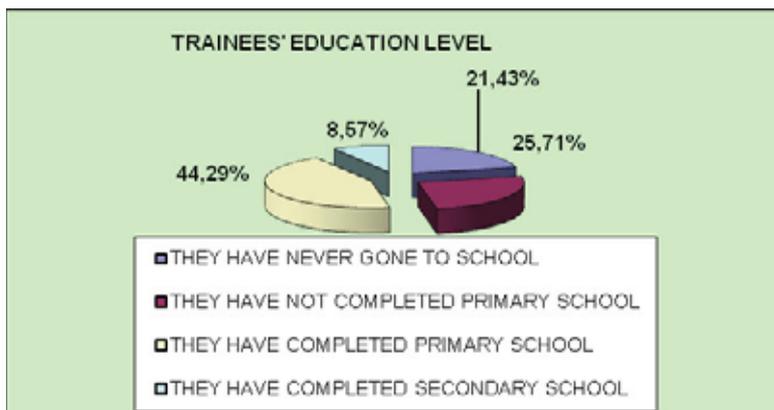


Figure 1. Trainees’ distribution according to their education level

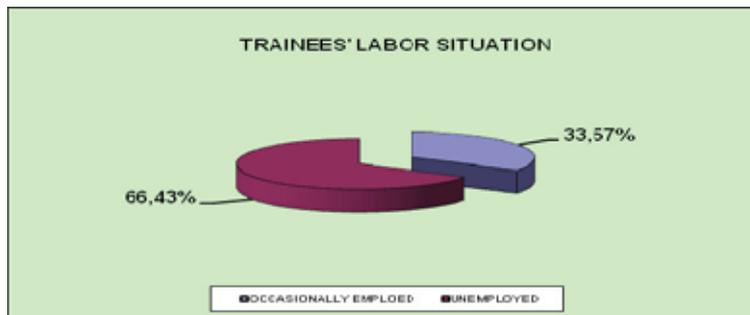


Figure 2. Trainees’ distribution according to their labor situation