

Investigating the Graduates' Prospects in the ICT Labour Market

Vassilis Kostoglou

Department of Informatics, Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki

P.O. Box 141, 57400, Sindos, Greece

E-mail: vkostogl@it.teithe.gr

ABSTRACT

Educational system's efficiency depends largely on the prospects of its graduates in the labour market. It has been acknowledged that a close relationship between the education provided and the enterprises needs and demands is essential for lowering the skills gap. Therefore the study of the prospects of the labour market itself and the specialized human resources presents considerable interest.

This work focuses on the investigation of the information and communications technologies (ICT) labour market evolution and prospects. Certain issues of this labour market, directly related to the ICT graduates' professional prospects, are examined.

The methodology adopted consists of the conduct of a recent national survey addressed to all ICT enterprises residing in Greece. A structured questionnaire was used as the main research tool. It has been designed according to internationally approved techniques aiming to raise the answers credibility, as several of the questions examine the enterprises attitudes and opinions towards graduates' employment prospects. Informants were intensively approached, intending to maximise their response rate. In total 343 filled and valid questionnaires were collected, corresponding to a response rate of 30.2%, absolutely satisfactory for gathering representative results and deducing reliable conclusions.

Initially the ICT enterprises' main profile characteristics are outlined at national level. The main issues examined through 26 successive and supplementary questions asked to the enterprise representatives are the following (in the parentheses are the numbers of the corresponding questions): a) the enterprises' progress during the period of last three years (4 questions), b) the estimation of the prospects for the next three years (4), c) the opinions about ICT labour market's present state (3), d) the opinions for the prospects in a five-year period, regarding the expected unemployment rates' alterations for graduates of all educational levels, the degree of specialization as well as the expected graduates' number and demand (8) and e) the predictions about the forthcoming demand variation of each one of the seven main specialization sectors of ICT personnel (7).

For the analysis of the above issues descriptive and multivariate statistical techniques are applied using the statistical package SPSS. Furthermore the relationships between the parameters describing ICT enterprises progress and graduates' prospects (considered as survey's dependent variables) and enterprise profile characteristics (considered as the independent variables) are examined through relevant compound research hypotheses.

All main results obtained are presented and discussed. The conclusions drawn show that the professional prospects of both; ICT enterprises and graduates are optimistic. The latter will suffer a much lower unemployment rate that those of other professional fields. On the other hand they have to follow labour market's demand and estimation for further specialization. Finally the research findings indicate that the so far evolutionary course and the forthcoming prospects of ICT enterprises primarily depend on their size (number of employees) and secondarily on their geographical range of activities and location.