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Career Advising in Cypriot High Schools

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The number of students studying engineering has been falling, prompting warnings about serious shortage of skilled engineers around Europe [1-4]. As a result, societies lack of qualified engineers who are necessary for the implementation of fundamental societal functions. This has led to the growing need to increase attractiveness of engineering studies and promote their awareness to potential students of engineering degrees. Furthermore it has prompt the importance identifying the right sort of students for a degree in engineering, ensuring that only those who really want to become engineers are enrolled, thus decreasing the number of dropout students. Previous work [5] investigated ways that Universities employ to attract students into engineering disciplines.

In the context of the Academic Network of European and Global Engineering Education (EUGENE), a line of activities has been formulated which examines the concept of attractiveness of engineering studies within the European educational area. One of the main objectives of these activities has been to identify and disseminate the good practices in attracting students to engineering disciplines and degrees [5]. The purpose of this work is to go a step backwards by looking how students are guided and advised through the last three years of their high-school life (Unified Lyceum). This is a regional based survey that was designed and implemented for the educational system of Cyprus.

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The outcome of this work stressed the role of the SCs and showed that it is a provision in schools that is employed by many countries. The duties and responsibilities are specified according to the needs of each country's educational system. Regarding the Cypriot school counselling model, the results of our survey-based methodology depicted that very few school counsellors come from an engineering related background or in fact other related science backgrounds. Furthermore, most of the SCs have a post-graduate degree in school counselling related area. Advising is taking place in collaboration with the students and their parents. Students are advised to select a number of courses that will allow them to study a degree. This is done based on their skills, inclination and general interests. In addition, engineering related degrees are not as popular as others. However it is unknown whether the SCs have the capacity and the eligibility to give enough details and stir the interest of the students to follow an engineering discipline. In our view it is important that school counsellors who provide career advising to students who want to study engineering, should have engineering background themselves and should be in touch with the industry. An alternative solution from employing additional school counsellors coming from an engineering discipline is to involve people from industry who better understand the requirements of the current and future market and are up-to-date with the technological advances in industry. ■

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