**Finding one's place in life: Exploring the relation
between upper secondary vocational education and social cohesion
in times of economic crisis. The cases of Greece and England**

Ioanna Katsikopoulou

PhD

University of York

Education

May, 2016

Dedicating this work to all those
supporting women to make change

Abstract

This study explores the relation between upper secondary vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. Greece and England frame the specific context of research. I have set two research questions to investigate how vocational education is envisaged to support vocational students to find their place in life. The first concerns their inclusion in the labour market (as an aspect of the economy), and the second their inclusion in society (as distinct from the labour market). I am using the concepts of human capital and social capital as analytical lenses to address the research questions. This is an inductive study of perceptions of vocational education, as articulated in selected education policy documents and interviews with participant teachers. The first source of evidence includes six (sets of) state education policy documents produced over the period of 2003-2013, and the second semi-structured interviews with twenty-eight vocational teachers in total, equally distributed between the cases of Greece and England. Findings from the documentary analysis indicate that vocational education is directed towards strengthening human capital development through specialised preparation for immediate employment and the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge and skills, in an attempt to address the social cohesion challenges of economic disruption and youth unemployment. If successful development appears to be more a matter of collective effort in Greece, in England it would depend more on the individual student. Findings from the interview data show that participant teachers recognise the importance placed on human capital development and support the role of vocational education in the creation of social capital and social ties. Despite structural differences between Greece and England, vocational education is envisaged to foster social cohesion by assisting its students in the development of a sense of acceptance and belonging possibly to the detriment of excellence. Such findings invite further research.

List of Contents

Chapter 6   Participant teachers' perceptions of the relation between vocational education and the labour market in Greece and England   157

Chapter 7   Participant teachers' perceptions of the relation between vocational education and society in Greece and England   185

List of Tables

Acknowledgements

The PhD journey can be a time of excitement and challenges. Having supporters through the journey of knowledge and awareness can add meaning to the whole experience. In this light, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to the following people for their contribution to an amazing journey:

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is an original piece of work of mine. No part of this thesis has been previously published or submitted for another award or qualification in other institutions or universities. I declare that all the material in this thesis which is not my own, has to the best of my ability, been acknowledged. The material in the thesis has not been submitted previously by the author for a degree at this or at any other university.

Chapter 1
Establishing the Context of the Research Study

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will establish the context of my research study. I will discuss the direction of the study, the role of vocational education and training and social cohesion in times of economic crisis, and the rationale for the study. To highlight the direction of the study, I will present its aim and purpose, including the research questions. To illuminate the significance of vocational education and training and social cohesion, I will look into current developments in vocational education (and training) in the European Union, with the focus on Greece and England, as well as key issues in social cohesion. The discussion of the rationale for the study will be organised into the rationale for the topic of research, the selection of Greece and England as cases, and the pursuit of qualitative case study research. To establish a common understanding of the topic of research, I will introduce the key terms and concepts used in this study. Finally, I will present the structure of the study.

1.2 The aim and purpose of the research study

This study will explore the relation between upper secondary vocational education (*vocational education* hereinafter) and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. It is an inductive study of perceptions of vocational education, as articulated in selected policy documents and in interviews with participant practitioners in Greece and England. The research interest lies in subjective views and experiences of vocational education rather than tangible and measurable outcomes. I will investigate how vocational education is envisaged to support vocational students to find their place in the labour market and society. I will focus on vocational study programmes or courses which lead to the acquisition of formal qualifications, and permit immediate employment as well as the pursuit of higher studies. The wider context of the study will be the European Union (*EU* hereinafter) and European joint ventures to establish a common understanding of vocational education and training (*VET* hereinafter).[1] Greece and England will frame the context specific to the topic of research.

The purpose of the study is to explore the envisaged direction of vocational education in terms of preparation for employment, immediate or through higher

---

[1] The terms *EU* and *European* will be used interchangeably herein.

education, and for coexistence with others through social ties in a society whose economic growth and prosperity have been disrupted by the economic crisis, as manifested in business closures and job losses. I will look into how vocational education can support its students to enhance their (formal) qualifications and develop the ability to create social ties, in order to get included in the labour market (as an aspect of the economy) and society (as distinct from the labour market), and contribute to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. I will use the concepts of *human capital* and *social capital* as analytical lenses, in order to address the overall question of how vocational education can contribute to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. I will organise the overall question into the following two research questions in this study:

Research question 1: About the labour market

How is vocational education envisaged to support its students to find their place in the labour market in Greece and England?

    a) What perceptions are communicated through state education policy documents?

    b) What perceptions are held by vocational teachers?

    c) What are the main similarities and differences between Greece and England?

Research question 2: About society

How is vocational education envisaged to support its students to find their place in society in Greece and England?

    a) What perceptions are communicated through state education policy documents?

    b) What perceptions are held by vocational teachers?

    c) What are the main similarities and differences between Greece and England?

Responses to these questions are expected to illuminate aspects of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in Greece and England, framed by the current economic crisis.

1.3 Understanding the importance of vocational education in times of economic crisis

To understand the importance of VET in times of economic crisis, I will look into the inception of vocational education and the development of a common space for European VET, including the economic and social needs addressed at certain stages of its development. I will focus on the Copenhagen Process for European cooperation in

VET, in order to identify potential changes to the role of VET in the economy and society. I will then examine current developments in vocational education in Greece and England, which will provide an initial understanding of the needs vocational education is envisaged to meet in each country.

1.3.1 The inception of vocational education

I will briefly sketch the development of vocational education and the influential contribution of Dewey in its establishment mainly in English-speaking countries.[2]

The inception of vocational education as part of VET is closely linked to the Industrial Revolution in America and Europe. Production systems which "comprised farm work, domestic handicrafts and other cottage industries" would be "gradually overshadowed by larger scale industries" (Watkins, as cited in Anderson, 2009, p 38).[3] According to Anderson (2009), rural societies became urban and industrialised, and work expanded in different forms, shapes and spaces. The establishment of a new production system was complemented by the consolidation of mass schooling. A new model of economy and society was constructed, which was defined by efficiency and productivity. To meet the new demands of the economy and society, specialised preparation for the labour market was offered through education and schooling. In other words, vocational education was organised to prepare the required workforce for a labour market divided into sectors and industries. If occupations associated with the clergy, medicine and law, and practised by the more dominant classes, were initially considered vocational, following the Industrial Revolution, the more technically-based occupations would be defined as vocational and embody the wider assumption that they are of lower economic and social status, and practised by the less dominant classes (Dewey, 1916/1966; Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Pring, 2007).

Vocational education has been partly established under the influence of Dewey and his perspective on education and democracy (Billet, 2011; Lewis, 2007; Pring, 2007). Dewey (1916/1966) perceives the school as a community where young people receive education and achieve learning by living together and sharing experiences. Education and schooling prepare them for democracy and the creation of a society ideally defined by full and free participation of its citizens. He defines the ideal society

---

[2] Kerschensteiner is considered an influential figure mainly in German-speaking countries. He supported the expansion of vocational education and the idea of joy in work. He may not have conceived vocational education as a means of promoting full and free participation in life (see Gonon, 2012).
[3] A production system can be defined as a "manufacturing subsystem that includes all functions required to design, produce, distribute, and service a manufactured product" (Production system, n.d.).

as follows: "Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of the mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 99). In such a society, vocational education prepares young people for social and political participation in life, along with participation in the labour market; interested parties "strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial society, and ultimately transform it" (Dewey, as cited in Billet, 2011, p. 29). This type of vocational education supports students to find their *vocation*. The learning content would address economic as well as social and political needs, in order "to provide the competence that citizens in a democracy needed to be able to integrate their work, family and community lives" (Lewis, 2007, p. 87). Vocational education (or vocational preparation) would prepare young people to find their vocation and hence achieve all-round development leading to a way of life defined by values which are associated with the occupation of choice; personal fulfilment would derive from the pursuit of such a way of life (Pring, 2007).

In the course of time, the meaning of vocational education would be intertwined with the needs of the existing labour market and society. A divide between academic education and vocational education would be established, which "constantly reasserts itself, and this is reflected in many government initiatives and papers" (Pring, 2007, p. 119). The term *tradition* is used to highlight continuity in time, with the vocational tradition becoming associated with *practical utility* and *personal effectiveness* as opposed to *intellectual excellence* and *personal development* attributed to the academic tradition (p. 124). Preparation for political participation in life would be closely associated with academic education and excellence or form a distinct learning path. The meaning of vocational education would expand to include the notion of training, leading to the introduction of the term *VET* in the discourse of education and work. In times of economic crisis, vocational education as part of VET is ascribed a determining role in social cohesion, a role which is not equally shared with academic education. Exploring the envisaged direction of vocational education is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the perceived connection between vocational education and social cohesion.

1.3.2 The inception of European VET

The inception of European VET can be traced back to 1957. Aiming to anchor peace and democracy, participating countries in the European Coal and Steel Community

entered into agreement on skill development for workers in the coal and steel industries at a Community level. This was to be achieved by moving workers within these two industries and through "the transnational recognition of vocational qualifications" (Cort, 2011, p. 77). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the Community policy would be expanded to include more industries, with the organisation of VET corresponding to these industries (or economic sectors). Cort (2011) asserts that this approach to VET "is still current today where a sector approach can be found in the establishment of credit transfer and mutual recognition of qualifications" (p. 77).

Following the Maastricht Treaty for the establishment of the EU (1992-1993), two European reports would provide some insight into the relation between VET and social cohesion: the 1993 White Paper on economic growth and employment (BEC, 1993), and the 1995 White Paper on education and training (BEC, 1995). The 1993 White Paper advocated a role for education and training in maintaining a balance between economic growth and social cohesion. According to Brine (2006), the then expansion of the EU raised concerns about its cohesiveness, whilst perceived high rates of unemployment generated the feeling of fear of a divided society defined by instability. It would be explicitly articulated that due to past failure to support "those in a disadvantaged position in the labour market" to secure employment, "the Community now faces the danger of not only a dual labour market but also a dual society" (BEC, 1993, p. 134). In this light, proposed measures to strengthen social cohesion through VET placed emphasis on vulnerable groups such as the unemployed youth, those who are not engaged in part-time or full-time employment and cannot sustain themselves financially.

If the 1993 White Paper highlighted the need to avoid the threat of a divided society in Europe, the 1995 White Paper brought forth the need to eliminate the threat of exclusion from the mainstream society, a term used to refer to a society whose members are employed and preserve stability. Knowledge would be considered a valuable asset to secure social inclusion, translated into employability skills. Ideally, a balance between *basic knowledge*, defined as "the foundation on which individual employability is built", and *technical knowledge* "which permits clear identification with an occupation" (BEC, 1995, p. 13) and is fundamentally acquired within vocational education, would enable individuals to enter and remain in the labour market. This led to a call for establishing links between schools and businesses on the grounds that they "mutually complement one another as places of learning" (p. 38). In this way,

learners would assume an occupation-related identity, enhance their employability and avoid exclusion from the mainstream society.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the EU would encounter rigid competition from other advanced economies. In an attempt to restore international competitiveness, the European Council launched the 2000 Lisbon strategy which set out plans for the transformation of Europe into the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy and society worldwide by 2010 (European Parliament, 2000). Knowledge would be regarded as a key tool for economic and social sustainability. The Lisbon strategy makes it clear that "the EU must compete in the global market; it must be at the cutting edge of technology" and that it "needs its citizens to have high-level knowledge-skills" (Brine, 2006, p. 654). With the individual being the centrepiece, the European Council called for the creation of more and better jobs, and the fostering of social cohesion; hence it projected a direct relation between employment and social cohesion. The centrality of VET to the Lisbon strategy is manifested in the Copenhagen Declaration on strengthening European cooperation in the field of VET. The *Copenhagen Process*, as it is widely known (Tessaring & Wannan, 2004, p. 4), was developed within the lifelong learning framework which initiated measures for updating employability skills throughout life. European citizens are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning activities, in order to address the needs of a changing economy and labour market, and assume responsibility for their inclusion in the labour market and society.

In the European context and in initiatives to establish a common understanding of VET, the goals of economic growth and social cohesion are intertwined. Employment emerges as the link between these goals, whilst VET is projected as a means of securing employment for the individual and preparing higher-level skilled workers for the labour market. Lack of employment triggers the fear of a society being divided into the employed and the unemployed, whilst individuals who lack the required level of knowledge are expected to encounter exclusion from the labour market and society. To address these fears, policy-makers promote a model of economy and society driven by knowledge and technology. As will be discussed next, the Copenhagen Process is viewed as a key lever to achieve these goals.

1.3.3 The Copenhagen Process for European cooperation in VET

In 2002, the Copenhagen Process is launched setting strategic objectives for improving the image of VET systems in Europe through enhanced cooperation (European

Commission, 2002). Its primary aim is to encourage European citizens to make use of any learning opportunities available, thus implying that the individual is responsible for their learning and subsequent inclusion in the labour market and society. The Copenhagen Process could be considered a milestone initiative in the European history of VET for a number of reasons. What is of interest herein is the fact that it promotes the use of a single common term (*VET*) to encompass the concepts of *vocational education* and *vocational training*, in order to establish a common understanding among interested parties (see Cort, 2011). Furthermore, it projects a direct relation between VET and social cohesion. Progress on the Copenhagen strategy would be reviewed every two years.

The first review is held in 2004, in Maastricht (European Commission, 2004). Interested parties draw attention to the need to raise the appeal of VET to both employers and learners in an attempt to improve participation in VET. To meet the requirements of an economy based on knowledge, they advocate the link between VET and labour market needs for workers (or employers) with a high level of skills. Raising the level of skills of individuals who are low-skilled or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds is anticipated to secure entry into the labour market and society. With regards to young people, it is suggested that VET should offer them "the key competences they will require throughout life" (European Commission, 2004, p. 3), thus explicitly linking VET to lifelong learning. It is implicitly articulated that VET systems should provide an inclusive learning environment to accommodate the needs of individuals facing some form of exclusion from the labour market and society, including early school leavers. In a possibly further attempt to raise the attractiveness of VET, permeability between VET and higher education is strongly supported.

Two years later, in Helsinki (European Commission, 2006), interested parties attribute a positive role to VET "in human capital accumulation for the achievement of economic growth, employment and social objectives" (p. 2). A possible explanation lies in the argument that "VET is an essential tool in providing European citizens with the skills, knowledge and competences needed in the labour market and knowledge based society" (p. 2). Individuals facing some form of exclusion from education and the labour market due to lack of required skills remain at the heart of reforming VET. This time, there is policy interest in attracting individuals "with high potential" (p. 3), thus implicitly associating the level of knowledge with individual potential: the higher the level of knowledge, the higher the potential. With regards to its political aspect, the Copenhagen Process has intensified attention to VET "and has inspired national

reforms" (p. 4). In the analysis and discussion part of this study, I will trace the relation between the Copenhagen Process and vocational education in Greece and England.

The next meeting takes place in 2008, in Bordeaux (European Commission, 2008). In times of economic crisis, interested parties state the following:

> The cooperation process launched in Copenhagen in 2002 has proved effective. It contributes to the success of the economic and social dimensions of the Lisbon Strategy. It has contributed to create a more positive and more dynamic image of VET, while preserving the wealth of the diversity of systems. (European Commission, 2008, p. 2)

The Copenhagen Process takes the view that VET can contribute to the economic and social sustainability of Europe; it can support individuals to get included in the labour market and subsequently preserve the stability of society. It is pointed out that the initiatives proposed at a European level "support the modernisation of systems and the transparency of qualifications, and further the development of mobility" (European Commission, 2008, p. 2). According to Cort (2011), the EU principally calls for enhanced mobility, in order "to be able to move workers from areas of unemployment to areas of labour shortage" (p. 63). Despite the perceived positive contribution of VET to the reality of Europe, there are ongoing challenges enhanced by the economic crisis. Concerns about the rates of youth unemployment are complemented by concerns about the attainment level. It is acknowledged that the current "crisis spreading to the whole economy will have consequences for employment: unemployment rates will probably rise" (European Commission, 2008, p. 4). It is thus considered "particularly important to encourage the investment in VET" (p. 4). This statement illuminates the policy belief in the role of VET in addressing disrupted economic growth and prosperity on the one hand, and indicates that resources dedicated to educational provision tend to be limited; particularly resources for VET.

Two years later, the meeting in Bruges marks the end of the goals set forth for 2010, and the beginning of a new frame of action for 2020 with short- and long-term objectives (European Commission, 2011). To address the growing problem of high youth unemployment, it is proposed that young people should be equipped with suitable skills to avoid occupations rendered obsolete or disappearing and hence address employment challenges of the present and the future. It is recognised that the labour market is changing and that VET can assume a role in preparing individuals to address change. The promotion of labour market relevance is anticipated to contribute to "a

better understanding of emerging sectors and skills, and of changes to existing occupations" (European Commission, 2011, pp. 9-10). The effectiveness of VET is projected as a responsibility shared among the state, the world of work and the world of education because they "all have a mutual interest in closer cooperation" (p. 12). Though Europe may not have become the most dynamic and competitive economy and society in the world by the end of 2010, there is growing belief in the role of VET in "contributing to employability and economic growth, and responding to broader societal challenges, in particular promoting social cohesion" (p. 10).

The launch of the Copenhagen Process supports the EU call for highly-skilled workers willing to engage in lifelong learning activities, in order to be able to respond to changes to and needs of the labour market. VET can play a determining role in enabling the individual to become a lifelong learner, respond to labour market needs (by avoiding disappearing jobs) and promote the cohesiveness of society. In times of economic crisis and subsequent high youth unemployment, belief in the role of VET in strengthening economic growth and social cohesion remains strong. Work mobility and shared responsibility for the effectiveness of VET would function as tools for promoting social cohesion through VET. Individuals would move to a place where they can get included in the labour market, contribute to its growth and preserve the stability of the society that surrounds them. Shared responsibility ideally indicates that every interested party in VET has a role to play accompanied by rights and responsibilities. Encouraging young people who have left school early to return to education through VET illuminates the envisaged role of VET in safeguarding inclusion in the labour market and society.

Vocational education has taken its own place on the European agenda of education and work. Cedefop publications (Cedefop, 2008, 2013) illuminate the need to raise its appeal and engage more young people; in particular those "who prefer non-academic learning" (Cedefop, 2013, p. 2). Concerns about the percentage of vocational students who complete a programme successfully lead to the observation that there is a "good deal of overlap between a country's participation and graduation rates" (Cedefop, 2014a, p. 57): where the participation rate is high, the graduation rate may be low, and vice versa. In *Beyond the Maastricht Communique: Developments in the Opening up of VET Pathways and the Role of VET in Labour Market Integration*, McCoshan, Drozd, Nelissen and Nevala (2008, pp. 86-89) affirm that there is considerable variation in participation rates in vocational education in Europe. In the Nordic countries, the average proportion is aligned with the 2006 EU average (around 55%). Where the apprenticeship system is widely implemented, such as Germany and Austria, the

proportion in vocational education is very high (around 60% and 70% respectively). The same would apply to the United Kingdom (around 70%) where "the three-track mentality which has shaped educational provision" (Pring, 2007, p. 119) in secondary education has contributed to the organisation of education into academic, vocational and apprenticeships. In Greece and the rest of the Mediterranean countries, the proportion would be lower (around 30%). State policy initiatives in Greece and England to engage young people in vocational education, and prepare them for the labour market and society will be presented next.

1.3.4 Current developments in vocational education in Greece

The concept of *vocational education* has taken time to find a place in the discourse of education in Greece. The first attempt to systematise vocational education after World War II was initiated in 1964 (Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education, 2005). This attempt did not come to fruition due to the political upheaval that followed a year later, and led to the 1967 dictatorship. Following the reestablishment of democracy, a system for technical and vocational education was set up in the period of 1976-1977, which was considered equal to the academic system and was organised in a similar way. Two types of vocational school were created: the technical lyceum and the technical school. In the period of 1997-1998, a new type of vocational school was introduced through the merging of the technical lyceum and the technical school.

Following the launch of the Copenhagen Process, in 2003, there are policy attempts to establish a national system for linking VET to employment. These attempts are crystallised in Law 3191/2003 (Hellenic Republic, 2003), which promotes a common understanding of concepts related to VET. The overall purpose is to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills they need in life, and to address the needs of the labour market for employees skilled in the specialties or specialisations required. The technical and vocational education system, as part of the national system, would place emphasis on the development and organisation of secondary education programmes which aim to combine what is perceived to be general learning and basic technical and vocational learning, in order to equip vocational students with suitable qualifications for entry into the labour market and society. It is considered important to deliver programmes which correspond to the specialties or specialisations required by the labour market, and prepare vocational students to meet these requirements. Law 3191/2003 has been partially implemented.

In 2005, the Pedagogical Institute presents a report on the establishment of two types of lyceum, as proposed by the Ministry of Education (Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education, 2005): the academic and the vocational lyceum. Generally, references are made to European joint ventures to establish a common space for education and training; these will be reiterated in the 2009 pedagogical report. Such references are understood to contribute to the rationale for the proposed reforms; education policy harmonisation between Greece and the EU sets the ground for the reforms. With regards to vocational education, interested parties explicitly articulate scepticism about its widely depreciated image and the impact on student participation. Along the same lines with the Copenhagen Process and the projected link between VET and lifelong learning, it is proposed that the vocational lyceum should adapt to a current state of affairs and prepare students to update their skills throughout life successfully. In accordance with Law 3191/2003 (Hellenic Republic, 2003), it is asserted that vocational education should combine general and vocational learning. By virtue of Law 3475/2006 (Hellenic Republic, 2006), two new types of vocational school are established: the vocational lyceum and the vocational school.

In 2009, permeability between vocational education and the university is promoted by virtue of Law 3748/2009 (Hellenic Republic, 2009). It stipulates that vocational lyceum leavers have the same right with general lyceum leavers to sit nationwide entry university exams. Vocational school leavers may make use of special legislation to enter higher vocational education (or technological educational institutions). In the same year, the Pedagogical Institute (Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education, 2009) presents a new report on the new government proposal for a different type of vocational school. This time, the term *technical* is re-established in the discourse of education. Researching the vocational school is considered more complicated and difficult than studying the general school. A possible explanation lies in the perceived dual role of vocational education: to prepare students to successfully perform and appreciate their future occupation on the one hand, and to support their right to be educated as citizens of a society on the other. Scepticism about school dropout and perceived academic failure of vocational students directs attention to the need to support students to improve the way they perceive themselves.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education (MoELLRA, 2011) presents its proposal for the technological lyceum whereby the vocational lyceum would merge with the vocational school. The proposal would not be put into effect due to constant changes in the political scene. In 2013, Law 4186/2013 (Hellenic Republic, 2013b) passed by

Parliament contains provisions for general and vocational schools at upper secondary level.

It becomes evident that there is policy concern about the low appeal of vocational education to young people and the lack of a direct link between vocational education and the labour market. The statement that it is challenging to research vocational education due to its dual role indicates its envisaged role in social cohesion: to prepare educated citizens for society and skilled workers for the labour market. Concerns about its link to the labour market imply a less effective role in employment. Policy emphasis is placed on organisational matters and the structure of the school system. In the discourse of vocational education, the terms *vocational* and *technical* are used interchangeably.

1.3.5 Current developments in vocational education in England

1963 seems to be a milestone year for vocational education in England.[4] That year, the Ministry of Education published a report (known as the *Newsom Report*) to promote a better education for students widely regarded as being "of average or less than average ability" (Ministry of Education, 1963, p. xv). Attention was implicitly directed to the impact of deeply-rooted assumptions about non-academic education and students when supporting the following: "It is possible that the potential of these children is very much greater than is generally assumed and that the standards they could achieve might surprise us all" (p. xiv). Since then, "a very wide range of courses, awards, institutions and…different rationales for vocational education" (West & Steedman, 2003, p. 12) can be identified. Of the three major vocational examining boards,[5] BTEC seems to provide school leavers with full-time courses in a wide range of vocational areas, which tend to combine academic and vocational learning, lead to formal qualifications, and offer the opportunity for higher studies (Pearson, 2016; West & Steedman, 2003).

Following the launch of the Copenhagen Process, in 2004, the working group on 14-19 education and skills reform led by Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 2004) proposes a unified diploma framework for the delivery and accreditation of academic and vocational education. The framework would be organised into twenty *lines of learning*;

---

[4] England is one of the four countries of the United Kingdom (UK). Each country has developed a separate education system. In the case of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the systems operate under a separate government. The UK government has overall responsibility for the organisation and function of the education system in England (Eurydice, 2016c). Where required, I am following the EU method of presentation: United Kingdom (England).
[5] These are the following: City and Guilds of London Institute, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), and Royal Society of Arts Examinations Board.

those targeted at upper secondary students would provide "a wide range of employment sectors and/or academic areas of study" (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 25). Interest in the development of generic (or academic) skills and subject area knowledge is complemented by interest in the social aspect of learning: students would learn to work in groups and use that learning to positively contribute to the communities they belong to. The use of the plural *communities* indicates that students would belong to more than one community. Concerns about the low appeal of vocational education lead to the following argument:

> There is no absolute distinction between vocational and general (or academic) learning. Good vocational provision develops skills, knowledge and attributes that are desirable in adult life generally, and not only in the workplace; conversely, much of what is learnt in general or academic learning is relevant to employment. (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 76)

The quotation above indicates that vocational education would not necessarily confine learning to the preparation for employment. On the other side, any form of education would eventually lead to employment. Though Tomlinson was commissioned to propose a unified framework for learning, "the political landscape was challenging" (Baker, 2005, para. 7) and the proposal was rejected. The 2005 White Paper, *14-19 Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005) addresses the Tomlinson proposal by promoting the development of distinct vocational qualifications under the title of *diploma*.

In 2007, the Green Paper, *Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training post-16* (DfES, 2007) is published, arguing for students to remain in education or training until the age of 18, in order to acquire more employability skills. Direct references are made to the 2006 review of skills (for adults) led by Leitch (Leitch, 2006). The review sets forth the strategic goal of turning the United Kingdom into a world leader in skills by 2020. It is considered important for the state, employers and individuals to share responsibility for the development of skills, in order to yield tangible outcomes for the development of the labour market and society. This is a consideration along the same lines with the Copenhagen Process and the call for shared responsibility. A link is identified between skills and social outcomes such as health, crime and social cohesion: the development of skills can contribute to the quality of health, crime reduction and the promotion of stability. Stability is thus an integral part of the discussion of cohesion. If in policy documents produced in Greece there are

references mainly to European joint ventures, the review led by Leitch makes references to the OECD bench= for education and work.

In 2011, the review on 14-19 vocational education conducted by Wolf (Wolf, 2011) and commissioned by the Department for Education is published. Wolf acknowledges that there is a wide range of vocational specialisations, programmes and qualifications available for young people, and questions their effectiveness in supporting students to access the labour market or higher education. She therefore argues for the delivery of programmes which secure progression. Supporting students to make informed decisions about their education and simplifying the structure of the current system are considered equally important. Recommendations for vocational education attribute an active role to employers: "These will allow institutions to respond to local and changing labour markets; and engage employers more directly in delivery and quality assurance" (Wolf, 2011, p. 22). Attention is directed to the concept of *vocational education* to underline that there is no standard definition and hence no common understanding of the concept. This leads to the assumption that the meaning of vocational education is determined by the needs of the existing labour market and society, and subsequently requires further exploration. In the same year, the government (DfE, 2011) would respond positively to all recommendations. In 2015, the final progress report would be published (DfE, 2015).

In contrast to Greece, in England, there is a strong link between vocational education and the labour market through the delivered vocational areas and specialties. This indicates that the role of vocational education in employment can be effective, thus facilitating students to enter the labour market. If in 2004, policy initiatives promote a holistic approach to preparation for life, in 2011 and in times of recession, vocational preparation focusses on securing employment, immediate or through higher studies. The review on (vocational) skills illuminates their perceived significance in social cohesion: on the one hand, they can enhance competitiveness and prevent economic disruption, and on the other hand, they can contribute to individual and collective wellbeing.

1.4 Understanding the importance of social cohesion in times of economic crisis

To understand the importance of keeping a society together in times of economic crisis, I will touch upon perceived economic and subsequently social challenges to social cohesion worldwide since the early 1990s, with the focus on the cases of Greece and England. I will then present key approaches to social cohesion, as promoted by European and international organisations and framed by the neoliberal movement. The

starting point of the presentation will be the introduction of Durkheim's approach to social cohesion. This presentation will contribute to a better understanding of how social cohesion is defined in this study.

1.4.1 Key concerns about social cohesion challenges

The need for social cohesion in times of economic crisis is associated with economic and social sustainability. In a cohesive society, individuals have access to educational opportunities, in order to get educated and qualified for the labour market. They get employed on the back of their qualifications to sustain themselves on the one hand, and to contribute their skills to productivity and economic growth on the other. They follow a chain of consecutive actions, balance individual and collective needs, and support the cohesiveness of a society. When this chain of action is disrupted as in the case of unemployment, the need to feel respected and validated may be challenged. Individuals may feel excluded from the mainstream society, not willing to participate in its stability and development.

Throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, Europe and the rest of the world would be confronted with a series of economic and social challenges; such challenges would be interpreted as a threat to keeping a society together (Battaini-Dragoni & Dominioni, 2003; BEC, 1993, 1995; European Commission, 2008, 2011; European Council, 2000; UNESCO, 2015b). In the early 2000s, there would be considerable decrease in industrial production in Europe, which would yield loss of international competitiveness and decline in the employment rate. In times of globalisation,[6] countries worldwide apprehend their interconnectedness and interdependence in respect of national economic and social growth and development. Though advanced countries promote the establishment of an economy and society driven by knowledge and technology, developing countries struggle to raise the level of knowledge and skills of their citizens. Knowledge and technology disparities contribute to inequality and polarisation between advanced and developing countries. Though world population is growing at a fast pace, Europe is turning into an ageing society, a change which raises concerns about the size of the workforce.

The global economic and subsequent social crisis of 2007-2008 would leave Europe ruffled. Though its member states would not be in crisis for the first time since

---

[6] Globalisation refers to the interconnectedness of countries and economic interdependence. It is defined as "a process in which social life within SOCIETIES is increasingly affected by international influences based on everything from political and trade ties to shared music, clothing styles, and mass media" (Johnson, 2000, p. 135).

the inception of the EU, there is something different this time. The current economic crisis has affected almost all countries, the markets and the citizens worldwide, regardless of status and competence. It has been compared to the economic depression which originated in the USA in 1929 and whose impact was felt worldwide (see Helbling, 2009; Temin, 2010). The crisis of 1929 had both social and political consequences. At a political level, it led to the introduction of the contemporary welfare state and the provision by the government of "a safety net for the elderly, the jobless, the disabled, and the poor" (Digital History, 2016, para. 1). In comparison with the crisis of 1929, the current crisis would similarly originate in the USA and be marked, but not caused, by the collapse of financial institutions. This time, investment banks with long tradition of involvement in the economy would collapse triggering the public's distrust of the markets. The state would reclaim its power (from the market) to intervene and save the banking system (Varoufakis, Patokos, Tserkezis, Koutsopetros, 2011). It is affirmed that the current crisis will leave *an indelible mark on the history of mankind*, giving rise to a new era (Varoufakis et al., 2011, p. 19).

EU member states considered to have a highly competitive economy would witness their position on the map of productivity and economic growth being challenged. Over the period of 2008-2009, the gross domestic product (GDP)[7] of Germany would decrease by 5% and of France by 2.6%; Ireland would witness a decrease by 7.1% and Finland by 7.8% (Varoufakis et al., 2011, p. 33). It is reported that in the UK and over the period of 2011-2012, 13 million people were living in poverty, with more than half of them living in a working family. Incomes were changing resulting in a growing gap between higher and lower incomes (MacInnes, Aldridge, Bushe, Kenway, & Tinson, 2013). In Greece, "as much as 35 per cent of the country's population ran the risk of poverty or social exclusion, while the share of those who were severely materially deprived was 19 per cent" (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014, p. 367). Generally, over the period of 1999-2008, "private households in the eurozone increased their debt levels from about 50% of GDP to 70%" (De Gaung, 2013, p. 1).[8]

---

[7] GDP refers to the "value of a country's overall output of goods and services (typically during one fiscal year) at market prices, excluding net income from abroad....If income from abroad is added, it is called gross national product (GNP)" (Gross domestic product, n.d.).
[8] The Eurozone currently covers 19 EU member states which use the euro as their national currency. Outside the EU, there are a number of countries using the euro as well. It has been adopted as part of the policy efforts to create an economic and monetary union under the Maastricht Treaty: "The introduction of the euro in 1999 was a major step in European integration" (European Commission, 2016, para. 1).

The symptoms of the economic crisis in the EU would reveal challenges in the organisation and function of the Eurozone, with economists indicating that this mechanism is in a fragile state and fails to promote solidarity and mutual support (see De Gaung, 2012; Varoufakis et al., 2011). If solidarity emerges as a challenging goal at a European level, it may be strengthened through social networks at a national level. Sotiropoulos and Bourikos (2014) argue that in times of economic crisis, social networks based on solidarity have expanded in Greece. It appears that when the power of the welfare state playing a paternalistic role is weakened, people would develop social networks, including exchange and distribution networks.

The global society is currently entangled in a wider crisis leading to the question of whether there is such a thing as social cohesion. Existing policies and practices for welfare and employment have been met with scepticism. Job insecurity and uncertainty have trampled over feelings of being part of a community or a society. Throughout the world, activists have gathered together to protest against the current way of living and the underpinning values. Migration and work mobility across countries worldwide has given rise to diversity. People and cultures have engaged in a continuous interaction and exchange of values and norms, whereby different cultural identities and communities would undergo renewal. Within given contexts of time and place, cultural renewal and appreciation have been met with further scepticism, engendering inequity and conflict on the one hand, and triggering the fear of fragmentation and polarisation on the other (Green, Preston, & Sabates, 2003; Rainsford, 2011; Roberts-Schweitzer, 2006). To tackle rising unemployment and address subsequent social fragmentation, there have been policy and academic efforts worldwide to implement action plans aiming to foster social cohesion. Education and training would be attributed a contributing role; emphasis has been placed on vocational education and training (OECD, 2015).

The academic and political discussion of social cohesion has turned into a mass media discussion. In Greece, discussions would revolve around concerns about social cohesion at a national and European level. To give an example, Liksouriotis (2012) sounds concerned about the promotion of social order at a national level. Social cohesion is associated with the strength of social ties among members of a society. A positive outcome of social cohesion would be the practice of social responsibility. The perceived link to the labour market and employment indicates that unemployment could challenge social cohesion. Developing common interests and balance between social groups is projected as a means of promoting social cohesion; this includes a balance between individual and collective needs. On the other side, Yfantopoulos (2013) sounds

sceptical about the limited role of the welfare state at a European and national level. Attention is directed to the impact of austerity measures on everyday life and the development of destructive feelings such as depression. The economic crisis is understood to emerge as an opportunity for interested parties to reconsider the extent of the role of the welfare state.

In the United Kingdom, there are similar discussions about social cohesion. The 2011 street disturbances in a number of cities, in response to reduction in youth expenditure, would be framed by feelings of fear and concerns about the cohesiveness of society. As Smith (2011) points out, policy-makers and popular press would be taken aback by the intensity of the youth protests, as manifested in their depiction of these events and the use of expressions such as broken Britain. The Conservative party would declare their intention to tackle the social problem of the broken society by reviewing the state policy on parenting and education (Hawkins, 2011), a policy initiative which attributes a decisive role to education in social cohesion. Atkins (2012) expresses scepticism about the concept of big Britain. Like Yfantopoulos, Atkins draws attention to the limited role of the welfare system and the increased role of the individual in the neoliberal discourse of social cohesion. This change would have an impact on daily life: an increased role implies increased responsibilities rather than rights.

The neoliberal discourse defines the neoliberal movement which has been followed by advanced countries and has become the prevailing economic and political model. The government would assume a less determining role in the economic and social support of citizens, whilst the market would assume more power. The welfare state responding to needs would make way for the global (neoliberal) state responding to commercialism in all aspects of life, including education and learning (see Ball, 2015). The neoliberal discourse is fundamentally underpinned by the notions of quality, effectiveness and equity. With regards to education, an indicative example (prior to the economic crisis) is the 2006 Communication on enhancing the efficiency and equity in European education and training systems. Improving the quality of all stages of education and training is anticipated to contribute to efficiency, defined in terms of inputs and outputs, and equity, associated with educational opportunities and outcomes (CEC, 2006, p. 2). The discourse of education and work is shaped by economic terms which are intertwined with social goals. This may explain how the goal of enhancing competitiveness is complemented by the goal of fostering social cohesion. The individual is expected on the one hand, to assume an active role in the labour market and contribute to competitiveness, and on the other hand, to become an active member

of a society and support its cohesiveness (see Fairclough, 2003). The purpose of educational institutions tilts away from education valuable in its own right towards the preparation of the knowledge worker (Patrick, 2013, p. 2). Education is crystallised in the form of levels of knowledge suitable for the enhancement of economic growth and competitiveness in accordance with the requirements of the global market.

The main reasons for the promotion of social cohesion in respect to the economy are encapsulated in the following statement:

> If sections of society are marginalised they will contribute less to the economy. They will have poorer education and limited skills to contribute. They have less capital to invest. They may also be less willing to contribute to a society which they feel does not respect them and treat them as full citizens….The state may resort to increased security measures, such as enlarged security forces, enhanced equipment for the security services, larger and stronger prisons. (Club de Madrid, as cited in OECD, 2011, pp. 57-58)

A society is considered cohesive when all its members have access to educational opportunities. In a cohesive society, individuals feel respected and included. That feeling drives them to contribute their skills in labour market productivity and to engage in society. In the case that they feel excluded, they may behave in a non-constructive way and be of some risk to social stability and economic growth: financial resources may be invested in preserving stability rather than strengthening the economy. In other words, when a society is not cohesive, economic growth may be disrupted. When economic growth is not achieved, there will be individuals who feel marginalised and have no sense of belonging, that sense which defines the productive members of the labour market and society. This paves the way to discussing key approaches to social cohesion.

1.4.2 Key approaches to the promotion of social cohesion

In this study, research interest lies in young people and their place in life. My understanding of a society being cohesive is when young people have access to learning opportunities available in the education system. In this society, they feel respected and validated. They can explore their potential, recognise what makes them unique and develop a sense of acceptance. They derive fulfilment and satisfaction from the activities they are engaged in, including the creation of social ties and employment. To illuminate my understanding of social cohesion, I will look into three approaches to the

promotion of social cohesion, as introduced by the Council of Europe (and the EU), OECD and UNESCO (and the UN). The discussion will be framed by the introduction of Durkheim's approach to social cohesion and social solidarity.

Durkheim discerns two types of social solidarity and knitting a society together: mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. The glue that keeps together a less complex and more traditional society is collective consciousness: the sharing of common ideas, beliefs, behaviour and disposition in a mechanical way, independent from the individual. Lukes (1973) points out that Durkheim perceives *mechanical solidarity* as "a solidarity *sui generis* which…directly links the individual with society" and which stems from the fact that "a number of states of consciousness (*conscience*) are common to all the members of the same society" (p. 149; italics in original). On the other side, in a more complex society defined by division of labour, where individuals perform different tasks and hold different parts, interdependence of its members is key to solidarity and social cohesion. In a society which promotes *organic solidarity* "the individual 'depends upon society because he depends upon the parts which compose it', while society is 'a system of different and special functions united by definite relations'" (Lukes, 1973, p. 153; quotation marks in original). If mechanical solidarity is intertwined with a higher level of homogeneity, organic solidarity would support a more differentiated society. A modern industrial society would then be based on organic solidarity.

As mentioned earlier, in the 1990s, there were concerns that Europe may turn into a dual society defined by fragmentation and polarisation. In 1998, in an attempt to address such a risk, the Council of Europe laid grounds for the development of a strategy for social cohesion (Battaini-Dragoni & Dominioni, 2003). In 2004, the strategy is revised to adopt a human rights-based approach. This means that emphasis is placed on safeguarding the right of all European citizens to welfare and hence to economic and social inclusion:

> As understood by the Council of Europe, social cohesion is the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. A cohesive society is a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means. (Council of Europe, 2004, p. 3)

The definition provided by the Council of Europe indicates that where disparities are eliminated, society would not become fully cohesive; rather, economic and social

conditions may be improved for all. Freedom and democracy emerge as two pillars of a cohesive society. It is clarified that the concept of *welfare* encompasses "the dignity of each person and the recognition of their abilities and their contribution to society, fully respecting the diversity of cultures, opinions and religious beliefs" (Council of Europe, 2004, p. 5).

Five constituent elements of a cohesive society can be identified in the revised strategy. The starting point is to recognise that all interested parties share responsibility for keeping a society together. A cohesive society promotes some integration between social and economic life. It is specified that economic growth (economic life) needs to be complemented by the development of the human being (social life), in order to tackle poverty and foster social cohesion. Social responsibility extends the limits of the state to include all members of a society. This indicates that individuals understand and accept that they can impact each other's lives. Where individuals share responsibility for each other's development, their right to welfare is *best protected* in the society that surrounds them. The family is projected as the first social system where individuals experience social cohesion and the importance of social ties in personal fulfillment. As such, a cohesive society protects and supports the institution of the family. Furthermore, it encourages participation of its members in civil society. This means that individuals participate in various social networks where they build social ties which "help to knit society together" (Council of Europe, 2004, p. 14).

According to OECD (2011), a cohesive society is defined by collective interest in the wellbeing of its members. This interest is manifested in the state of being included, the development of a sense of belonging and the feeling of trust. A cohesive society provides its members with opportunities to improve their life. If human capital is considered a pillar of social cohesion for the Club de Madrid, social inclusion, social capital and social mobility constitute three dimensions of the OECD conception of *social cohesion* (OECD, 2011, p. 54). Social inclusion is defined as opposed to poverty, inequality and polarisation. In a knowledge-based labour market and society, social inclusion refers to bridging the gap between holders of high-level and low-level qualifications. Social capital is associated with trust to participate in social networks and build social ties with other members. Social mobility signals the belief that individuals can improve their position in the labour market and society. Where emphasis is placed depends on the priorities of a society. Measurement of social cohesion is projected as a subjective process translated into questions about the way individuals feel about their

life. Criticism about subjective questions and responses is rebutted by the claim that individuals need to be encouraged to express their own feelings about their life.

The UN (2012) equally considers trust as part of the *glue* that keeps a society together. In a cohesive society, individuals have the opportunity to improve their life and look forward to the future. They similarly consider social inclusion, social capital and social mobility integral elements of social cohesion. In this light, UNESCO (2015b) perceives education, including vocational education, as a contributing factor to social cohesion. Education is anticipated to provide young people with the tools they need to improve their place in life, and subsequently contribute to the creation of a peaceful and cohesive society. Education is envisaged to assist young people in exiting poverty, getting included in society and protecting the environment. In a cohesive society, there is balance between individual and collective goals. On the one hand, individuals work towards meeting their personal need to achieve and progress. On the other hand, they contribute to the development of the communities they belong to.

In the global discourse of social cohesion, including international organisations, social cohesion is projected as a positive goal and outcome which benefits the members of a society or community. It is likened to glue that sticks individuals together and legitimises cohesion policy actions. This glue embodies the feeling of belonging in the form of inclusion, acceptance in the form of social ties, and justice in the form of life opportunities.

1.5 Discussion of key terms and concepts in the research study

Establishing a common ground for terms and concepts recurring in this study will facilitate understanding of identified perceptions of vocational education and its relation to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. I chose to italise terms and concepts throughout the study, in order to make their significance clear. These will be organised into four groups: the meaning of vocational education, the notion of *qualifications*, the organisation of a society, the state of the economy, and the main types of capital.

The meaning of VET has widely expanded to include any type or form of education and learning which leads to employment. It is divided into initial and continuous VET, acquired prior to and following entry into the labour market respectively. Vocational education is considered part of initial VET which is defined as follows:

General or vocational education and training carried out in the initial education system, usually before entering working life….Initial education and training can be carried out at any level in general or vocational education (full-time school-based or alternate training) pathways or apprenticeship. (Cedefop, as cited in Cedefop, 2011, p. 6; brackets in original)

Along the same lines, Maclean and Pavlova (2013) point to the following: "Advanced countries are making upper secondary vocational education more general so that vocational students receive more academic content to broaden their occupational focus" (p. 52). In other words, vocational education is currently undergoing an academic turn; emphasis is placed on broadening employment opportunities for vocational students rather than on preparing them for participation in civil society. The need to be prepared for employment and hence meet expectations of the labour market becomes more evident in the discourse of higher education. Agevall and Olofsson (2015) indicate that there are vocational occupations which allow for the acquisition of *professional status* through higher education studies. As a result, academic and vocational elements of knowledge and skills are incorporated into the content of learning. Such blending appears to ignite tension between the academic and the vocational world, affecting the expectations of students, employers and the state in relation to inclusion in the labour market.

In this study, the term *vocational education* indicates organised and structured learning developed within the state education system,[9] and delivered in vocational schools in Greece or further education colleges in England. It may combine classroom-based learning and workshop practice. It is targeted at *vocational students* aged mainly 15-18 in Greece or 16-19 in England, who have the opportunity to pursue immediate employment and/or higher studies on the back of their vocational qualifications.[10] Therefore, the term *vocational teachers* refers to teachers who deliver upper secondary vocational courses at schools or colleges, and possibly have relevant experience of the workplace. In Greece, vocational teachers normally hold a higher education degree and a pedagogical training certificate, and have been appointed to vocational schools following successful participation in the relevant nationwide exams (Eurydice, 2015b). In England, they may have obtained qualified teacher status, and will have been

---

[9] For information about the structure of the education system in Greece and England, see Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

[10] In reality, based on interviews with participant teachers, students may be over 18/19 because they have repeated a school year, or changed course, or started a new one.

recruited through an open application process at a local level, with employers setting the criteria for recruitment (Eurydice, 2015d).

The second group is underpinned by the notion of *qualifications*. According to Cedefop (2014c), this notion embodies two main aspects: formal qualifications, such as a diploma or other title which is valued in education and the labour market, and job requirements. *Knowledge* is viewed as the "outcome of the assimilation of information through learning". This refers to "the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of study or work" (Cedefop, 2014c, p. 147). The term *skills* indicates the "ability to perform tasks and solve problems" (p. 227). The term *competences* refers to the "ability to apply learning outcomes adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal or professional development)" (p. 47; brackets in original).

The third group is related to the organisation of a society. As indicated earlier, *social cohesion* refers herein to a society whose members have access to all levels and types of formal education. With regards to young people, they develop a sense of being respected and validated. They can explore and discover their potential, relate to others and form bonds, and derive fulfilment and satisfaction from such actions. In a cohesive society, "all groups have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy" (Jenson, 1998, p. 15). According to Johnson (2000), the term *labour market* refers to "a set of social mechanisms through which labor is bought and sold" (p. 169). It is divided into occupations which correspond to sectors of the economy of a country, and reflects a further division of pay, status and security. *Society* is defined as a type of social system which "is distinguished by its cultural, structural, and population/ecological characteristics" (p. 297), promotes a sense of belonging and is distinct from the labour market. *Culture* is viewed as "the accumulated store of SYMBOLS, ideas, and material products associated with a SOCIAL SYSTEM, whether it be an entire SOCIETY or a family" (p. 73; capital letters in original).

The state of the economy group covers terms related to economic disruption. The term (*global) economic crisis* refers to the crisis that started in 2007, led to an unbearable lack of money or credit (Peston, 2009), and has affected the majority of the countries worldwide. This is not to be confused with the recession that affected the EU in the early 2000s (European Council, 2000). *Austerity* refers to policies and measures implemented by governments to reduce the debt deficit. These measures include cuts on government spending and tax increases. In times of austerity, there would be an alarming increase of unemployment rates due to job losses in the public and the private

sector. At the same time, there would be tax increases leading to reduction in household spending (Austerity measure, n.d.). In times of *recession*, the following has been observed: "Demand for goods and services declined, which had a knock-on effect on companies. Unemployment grew and investment stalled. With tax revenues declining, government borrowing also grew and attempts to rectify weak public finances exacerbated the crisis" (Giles, n.d.).

The last group concerns the main types of capital which have been identified in the literature consulted and are closely related to education, learning and work: economic capital, human capital, cultural capital, social capital and identity capital. This discussion will illuminate my decision to use human capital and social capital as analytical lenses. The basic type of capital is *economic capital* and the accrual of tangible assets which allow for the investment of time, effort and money in the development of other types. Studies and reports included in my literature review converge on the benefits of education for young people, both social and economic, and the society that surrounds them. *Human capital* development is perceived as a form of state investment in the individual and their potential for productivity; in other words, it is widely conceptualised as an aspect of the economy. The individual develops their human capital by enhancing their knowledge and skills and by adapting their behaviour and attitude to the labour market requirements. When they become employed, individuals are expected to invest their capital in the productivity of business organisations and, by extension, national economic growth and development. Human capital would serve as the basis for the development of cultural capital and social capital.

Ecclestone (2003) has explored the development of cultural capital and social capital through the assessment of outcomes of the more traditional vocational qualifications. Drawing upon key theorists (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 herein), she perceives *cultural capital* as the possession of knowledge about the function of the education system and opportunities for achievement and progression through education and training. It is emphasised that cultural capital development further demands "knowledge amongst teachers, parents and peers, and other people involved in students' lives (such as employers, welfare and guidance agencies), about how to 'play the system'" (Ecclestone, 2003, p. 31; brackets and quotation marks in original). To benefit from (vocational) education, young people need not only to acquire and enhance their capital but to know how to use it. *Social capital* is defined as "the actual or potential resources that individuals can mobilize through membership of organizations and social

networks. Such resources, particularly those of trust and reciprocity, are gained, used and fought over in different social fields" (p. 32). In the context of (vocational) education, young people would therefore gain resources by participating in the education system and networking with their peers, thus benefiting the society they belong to.

Schuller (2004) has developed a framework for interpreting and understanding the benefits of education and training for the individual and society (see Figure 2.1, p. 13). The framework revolves around three types of capital, that is, human capital, social capital and identity capital, and captures overlapping features among these concepts. *Identity capital* refers to the way young people learn to value themselves through education and training. The learning environment enables them to identify with individuals outside the family environment and hence to develop a sense of self. In the context of vocational education, young people prepare for the labour market and the practice of the occupation of study. Therefore, their identity capital would encompass values and dispositions defining their future occupation. It is understood that the way students perceive themselves and interact with others would have an impact on their plans and goals for their future: the higher the level of self-esteem is, the bigger the dreams and aspirations would be. That would have a knock-on effect on their motivation for learning and the sense of fulfilment from their participation in the education system. A strong sense of self is expected to facilitate the creation of social bonds and ties with others, within and outside the family environment. The strength may be affected by the level of knowledge and skills, and the qualifications they possess.

I decided to use human capital and social capital as my analytical lenses because they are widely considered key to economic and social sustainability through the inclusion of the individual in the labour market and society.

1.6 The rationale for the research study

Having established a common understanding of key terms and concepts, I will present the rationale for the study. I will explain why I chose vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis as the topic of research, and why I selected Greece and England as cases. I will then delineate the reasons for conducting qualitative case study research.

1.6.1 The rationale for the topic of research

Formulating the rationale for a research study calls for a response to the question of how that study will be different from what has already been published and hence what contribution it intends to make to the academic and wider community. Therefore, it is important to identify *the gap* in the literature relevant to the topic of research. This gap may refer to an aspect of the topic which has not been fully explored and understood, or a different perspective on a topic which has been widely researched (Cunliffe, 2015). I will argue that my study will fall between these two approaches. I will discuss current trends in research on the relation between vocational education and social cohesion, implicitly or explicitly delineated. The discussion will revolve around three approaches to VET, as identified by Tikly (2013): human capital, sustainable development and human capabilities. I will then present the potential contribution of my study to the academic and wider society.

My study will revolve around a topic which draws growing interest: VET in times of economic crisis. I will focus on that aspect of VET which has given precedence to its other aspects: vocational education. To understand its contribution to social cohesion, I will use two of the concepts embodied in the meaning of social cohesion as analytical lenses: human capital and social capital. These two types of capital are expected to be developed through education, including vocational education. I will look into human capital to explore the relation between vocational education and the labour market and employment, and social capital to investigate its relation to social capital and the ability to coexist. I will use the terms *economic security* to refer to the outcome from employment, and *human security* to indicate the benefit from coexistence. I will not investigate the relation between vocational education and social mobility because a considerable number of studies have been published on that topic.[11] I will not provide detailed empirical evidence on the relation between vocational education and social cohesion because I will build my study on theoretical literature related to key issues in human capital and social capital development through vocational education.

The first trend in research on the relation between vocational education and social cohesion is the *human capital* approach which conceptualises VET as a form of investment: the human being invests in (formal) qualifications accrued through VET, in order to prepare for entry into the labour market. It yields outcomes for the individual and the labour market, expected to support *human security* and *economic growth*

---

[11] A good example is the Higher Education Academy report on postgraduate transitions (Mellors-Bourne, Mountford-Zimdars, Wakeling, Rattray, & Land, 2016).

respectively (Tikly, 2013, pp. 5, 6). In times of economic crisis, Cedefop (2011) publishes a study on the benefits of VET for the individual and the labour market; these are projected as returns on investment. Returns for the individual are divided into economic and social, including social cohesion in the form of social relationships, and the development of self-esteem and self-confidence on the basis of employment (Cedefop, 2011). In other words, the study adopts and promotes a broader approach to human capital theory to borrow elements from other types of capital. This is interpreted as the recognition of possibility for vocational education to prepare its students for aspects of life other than the labour market and employment. Since the 2011 Cedefop study, there has been growing interest in types of work-based learning (such as apprenticeships) as a means of safeguarding employment and social cohesion (Cedefop, 2014b; OECD-ILO, 2014).

The *sustainable development* approach, as initiated by UNESCO, similarly views the human being as its centrepiece: individuals prepare through VET for challenges pertaining to globalisation on the basis of "principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability" (Tikly, 2013, p. 14). Social responsibility developed through VET is key to sustainability and refers to the practices of both the individual worker and the business organisation. In times of economic crisis, UNESCO (Subrahmanyam, 2013) organises a conference on the role of VET in tackling unemployment. The conclusion reached is that VET can play a positive role in the promotion of employment, and subsequently social cohesion, provided that educational institutions in the field of VET develop programmes targeted at youth employment and assume responsibility for their effectiveness. In 2015, UNESCO (Molz, 2015) places emphasis on apprenticeships and the importance of anticipating skills needs in sustainability.

The global economic crisis has given rise to a more specialised approach to VET. There is a strand of studies which examine measurable outcomes from VET. In 2012, in Greece, there is a study published on the assessment of the return on investment in post-secondary VET in Greece in terms of income from paid employment; a positive role is attributed to VET (Chanis, 2012). On the other side, there is research on the impact of austerity measures on the organisation and structure of VET. An indicative example in England is the 2016 research seminar on the impact of

these measures on adult learning, including VET;[12] participants from Europe would share their experiences and concerns about cuts in funding.

Those who follow the human capabilities approach criticise the human capital approach on the grounds that it focusses on the economic role of education, thus neglecting other roles. On the other side, sustainability is perceived as a concept whose meaning is specific to a culture and the current state of affairs. Drawing upon Sen and Nussbaum, they acknowledge the role of education and skills (as part of vocational education) in achieving economic and human security, and argue that these have "a great deal of intrinsic worth as capabilities in their own right" (Tikly, 2013, p. 18). The human capabilities approach is implemented mainly in developing countries, thus understood not to be promoted within the EU context.

The potential contribution of this study to the academic and wider community is to invite interested parties, ranging from practitioners in the field of VET to parents, to enter into discussion about the direction of vocational education. Current trends in research identify and highlight tangible and measurable economic outcomes. I will discuss tangible and non-tangible outcomes, such as certificates and relationships respectively, identified in perceptions of vocational education articulated in selected policy documents and by participant teachers in the study. Economic disruption has triggered feelings of insecurity and fear about the present and the future of individuals and societies. The fear of unemployment has contributed to insecurity about the cohesiveness of a society. I will combine the lenses of human capital and social capital to illuminate key issues in social cohesion which I consider equally important as employment. I will explore whether the direction of vocational education can and should promote both economic security (through employment) and human security (through social ties). I expect this exploration to contribute to a better understanding of the perceived connection between vocational education and social cohesion, and the need for vocational students to acquire a sense of belonging and acceptance possibly to the detriment of personal excellence. I will use my findings to solidify the invitation to the discussion about the direction of vocational education and, by extension, the direction of its students in life. Such findings invite further research.

---

[12] This forms part of the ESRC-funded research project on Higher Vocational Education and Pedagogy in England (HIVE-PED), and the issues of parity, progression and social mobility. These issues have been discussed over a number of research seminars and conferences. It has been emphasised that though the economy and society of Europe is driven by knowledge, there is less investment in education and training, thus limiting their roles and functions. For more information, see Tuckett (2016).

1.6.2 The rationale for selecting Greece and England as cases

I will first delineate the geographical areas of interest and then discuss aspects of the economy and society that have drawn my interest. Therefore, I will establish the conditions for comparability and touch upon what I expect to find and learn about vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

Geography-wise, Greece and England form the larger location, with selected areas in each country forming the specific location. In Greece, these are the units of Thessaloniki in Central Macedonia, Northern Greece and Trikala in Thessaly, Central Greece (see Appendix C). In England, these are the geographic counties of East, North, South and West Yorkshire (see Appendix D). These areas will be presented in detail in Chapter 4. Practical factors embedded in interviewing and economic factors pertaining to the specific location have influenced the selection process. The term *practical* refers to commuting distance to the place of interview and accessibility of participant teachers. The term *economic* involves sectors of the local economy, a fact which could assist in understanding the projected relation between vocational education and economic growth.

Case-wise, I chose Greece and England because they can reveal specific information about the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. When researchers juxtapose findings from different cultures, they can "identify repeated taken-for-granted cultural differences across societies" (Lamont & Thevenot, 2000, p. 2). By juxtaposing findings from the cases of Greece and England, I expect to find different conceptual nuances embedded in the relation between vocational education and social cohesion due to differences in the organisation of the economy and society (including education and culture). Comparing cases enables researchers to "submit specific cross-national similarities and differences noted in the literature to empirically rigorous exploration across many contexts and subject areas" (p. 3). The economic crisis comprises the overarching context of exploration.

Economy-wise, the economy of Greece is currently struggling to recover, whilst the economy of the United Kingdom (England) is still considered one of the largest and strongest worldwide. This fact can contribute to a deeper understanding of the connection between vocational education and the labour market as an aspect of the economy. It can allow for an understanding of the importance of having a strong and highly industrialised economy in the promotion of vocational education. Furthermore, this fact can unveil aspects of the relation of each country under study to the rest of the EU. Greece has had to address European partners' concerns over membership to the

EU, whilst the United Kingdom has raised the issue of opting out of the EU. Using terms related to social cohesion, Greece has had to strengthen the sense of being included, whilst the United Kingdom has enjoyed a sense of recognition of needs. This can allow for understanding the impact of the EU on the legitimisation of national policy proposals and reforms.

At the time of the writing, in Greece, upper secondary education is considered non-compulsory. Lower secondary students who decide to (and usually do) pursue further studies can choose between two distinct learning pathways and school systems: the academic and the vocational. Vocational education is delivered in morning and evening schools, of three- and four-year duration respectively, where vocational students can follow a vocational area and specialty of study (Eurydice, 2015a). The implementation of a national curriculum and national study programmes per specialty indicates a lower degree of autonomy of schools in Greece. In England, young people aged 16 are expected to remain in full-time education, or do an apprenticeship, or combine part-time education and training up to the age of 18. Vocational programmes and courses form part of the college curriculum in England, and may be delivered along with the academic ones. College students can follow a vocational programme or integrate academic and vocational courses into their programme (Eurydice, 2015c). Contrary to Greece, colleges enjoy a higher degree of autonomy by developing their own curriculum per area of study and in alignment with the state requirements. In both Greece and England, vocational education is incorporated into the mainstream education; this similarity can serve as a sufficient condition for comparability.

Furthermore, education funding has been affected by the economic crisis. In Greece, the implementation of the first memorandum would be marked by the state decision to have schools closed down or merged nationwide (Mastoras, 2011). The enactment of the second memorandum would lead to the discontinuation of vocational specialties popular with the student population of vocational schools (Hellenic Republic, 2013a). In England, increasing cuts in further education funding, including vocational education, has raised concerns among interested parties about the cost-effectiveness of further education colleges. Interested parties stress that these cuts "will limit their ability to meet individual, employer and community need" (AoC, 2014, para. 1).

Müller and Kogan (2010) argue that school life "and the experiences pupils and students make while in education can differ a lot from country to country" (p. 217). Therefore, vocational students and their teachers in Greece and England are expected to

experience educational reality in a different way. The economic crisis is expected to have had an impact on student engagement with learning, student expectations from their teachers, student dreams and aspirations for the future. A comparative study between Greece and England can contribute to a better understanding of the connection between the status of the economy and the educational reality. It is clarified that countries have (at least) one characteristic in common: they award formal qualifications which facilitate entry into the labour market (Müller & Kogan, 2010). Greece and England similarly award formal vocational qualifications corresponding to the labour market needs. This fact can serve as one more condition for comparability.

It should be stressed that the Copenhagen Process for strengthening European cooperation in the field of VET will not be used to match national strategies against it or to evaluate its implementation and effectiveness at a European and national level. Rather, it will be used to identify issues and themes relevant to the topic of research.

To better understand the rationale for selecting Greece and England, the current state of affairs in both countries under study will be presented next, separately.

1.6.2.1 Current state of affairs in Greece

Greece, officially known as the Hellenic Republic, is situated in Southeast Europe (see Appendix C). According to the 2011 population census, the resident population is 10.8 million (ELSTAT, 2012). By virtue of Law 3852/2010 (Hellenic Republic, 2010) on administration and local government, there are seven decentralised administrations divided into 13 regions, and subdivided into 74 regional units and 325 municipalities. Greece has been a EU member state since 1981, member of the Schengen area since 1992, and part of the Economic and Monetary Union (*EMU* hereinafter) since 2001 (Europa, 2016a). Within the Eurozone, the country is classified as a peripheral state, where the service sector emerges strong, and tourism and merchant shipping are considered traditional pillars of the national economy.

The political scene in Greece has been defined by ongoing changes. In 2006, New Democracy is serving as the Cabinet. Following the 2004 Athens Olympics, and associated deficit, the country would "be placed under fiscal monitoring by the European Commission, in 2005" (Malkoutzis, 2010, para. 2). In 2010, the government of PASOK is in power. In the same year, the Greek economy is downgraded and domestic debt crisis intensified. As a result, the country enters into agreement with the EU and the International Monetary Fund (*IMF* hereinafter) on a bailout programme. Austerity measures and structural changes are demanded, an act which has been met

with varied reactions by society. The first economic memorandum is enacted in May 2010; the second one is enacted in February 2012, this time, by the caretaker government.

In June 2012, the coalition government led by New Democracy in partnership with PASOK and Democratic Left is formed. In February 2015, the radical left-wing Syriza party wins the elections and forms coalition with the right-wing ANEL. The new coalition government renegotiates the bailout programme with the EU and the IMF. Concerns about the impact of the debt crisis in Greece on the European economy would be intensified, leading to the question of whether Greece should remain in the EU (Kirkup, 2015). In September that year, following new elections, Syriza returns to power in partnership with ANEL; a third economic memorandum is enacted.

The economic downturn has had a dramatic impact on employment. In July 2013, the rate of unemployment would climb to 27.88%. In November 2015, it would slightly decrease to 24.6%. Meanwhile, youth unemployment would rocket to 60.5% in February 2013, with three out of five young people under 25 being unemployed. In November 2015, it would decrease to 48% (Ferreira, 2016). Youth unemployment has affected the direction of internal migration. Unlike past trends, the country has witnessed part of the urban population moving (back) to rural areas. This direction has been supported by initiatives such as the allotment project. Launched in 2012, it would lead to the assignment of a considerable number of these allotments to young adults with university degrees (Kolonas & Ritzaleou, 2012).

1.6.2.2 Current state of affairs in England

England, the largest of the four countries of the United Kingdom, is situated in the southern part of the island of Great Britain, in Northwest Europe (see Appendix D). According to the 2011 population census, the resident population is 53.0 million (ONS, 2012). The country is divided into nine administrative regions and subdivided into counties (ONS, 2016). The national economy is considered one of the strongest at a European and international level. London, the capital city of the United Kingdom (England), is projected as the largest European financial centre. Having led the Industrial Revolution, the country would soon turn into the most industrialised country worldwide. A EU member state since 1973, the country does not form part of the EMU or the Schengen area but takes part in some aspects of Schengen; in particular, those which concern security matters and crime prevention (Europa, 2016b).

In comparison with Greece, there are fewer changes to the political scene in the United Kingdom (England). In 2003, the Labour party is in power, Tony Blair is the Prime Minister and the country addresses the dilemma of joining the EMU. The economy of the country is considered "one of the healthiest and strongest in the European Union" (Osborn, 2003, para. 1): low unemployment and inflation keep contributing to the economy growing well. In July 2007, Tony Blair steps down and the then Chancellor Gordon Brown takes office as Prime Minister. The (global) economic crisis leads the country to a recession in the period of 2008-2009, with the pound declining in value against the euro.

In 2011, the coalition government of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats is in power. Despite the 2008 recession resulting in depreciation of sterling, spending cuts and tax rises, the economy and labour market remain strong in comparison with other OECD countries (BBC, 2010; ONS, 2012). In February 2013, the country loses its top credit rating for the first time since 1978. This has contributed to an ongoing reduction in government expenditure on young people and youth work. By the end of 2012, the rate of unemployment would have reached 7.9%; by the end of 2015, it would have decreased to 5.1% (Taborda, 2016). In September 2011, youth unemployment would climb to 22.40%, signalling its highest point in times of economic crisis, to decrease to 13.40% in December 2015.

In May 2015, the Conservative Party wins the majority in the new elections and serves as the Cabinet. Following elections, Prime Minister David Cameron reiterates the call for a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should leave the EU. In January 2013, the initial call would bring the relation between the United Kingdom and Germany and France to a challenging state. The agreement reached around the 2016 Brussels summit would bring stability back (Wright, 2016). Following the June 2016 referendum, the country intends to withdraw from the EU.

1.6.3 The rationale for conducting qualitative case study research

I have followed the qualitative approach to research so to develop a clearer understanding of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis on the basis of perceptions communicated through selected policy documents and interviews with vocational teachers in Greece and England. In other words, I am aiming at "exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). With regards to participant teachers in the interview study, each teacher ascribes individual meaning to

their experience of vocational education. Regarding selected policy documents, each document imparts views of the policy-makers who have prepared it. Such experiences and views may be underpinned by common values and patterns, translated into *general themes* and allowing for "interpretations of the meaning of the data" (p. 4).

I chose the social constructivist paradigm to construct meaning of perceptions of vocational education and its relation to the labour market and society. Participants in a research study are expected to hold multiple meanings of their experience of the world that surrounds them. Interpreting these meanings would unfold the plurality of views and permit the voice of each participant to be heard. Meaning would be "formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8; brackets in original). In this study, both policy documents (implicitly) and vocational teachers (explicitly) will be treated as research participants whose world is framed by vocational education, the labour market and society. Within this world, they would interact with other members, including vocational students. They would be affected by the historical context which spans over the European and global economic crisis. Experiences and views would be developed in the cultural context of Greece and England.

The case study is my *strategy of inquiry* (Creswell, 2009, p. 13) into the envisaged contribution of vocational education to social cohesion. It is a multiple case study, with Greece and England forming two cases. Where required, they will be discussed separately; otherwise, there will be cross-case analysis. Yin (2003) defines the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Exploring the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in Greece and England in times of economic crisis, may reveal new or different aspects of the role of vocational education in getting included in the labour market and society.

A (multiple) case study "relies on multiple sources of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result" (Yin, 2003, p. 14). The *dataset* will comprise two sources of evidence: selected policy documents and interviews with vocational teachers. The first set will include state policy documents discussing vocational education and produced by the ministries of education in Greece and the United Kingdom (England) over a certain period of time. Ball (1993) argues that education policy documents can be viewed as representations of educational reality. In this light, selected policy documents reveal aspects of the preparation of young

people for the labour market and society through vocational education. It is clarified that "policies do not normally tell you what to do" (Ball, 1993, p. 12); rather, they frame decisions, actions and events, which may be determined by an individual's understanding of policies. Therefore, the selected policy documents will frame the wider picture of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion.

The second set will comprise texts from interviews with vocational teachers in Greece and England, and provide a more detailed view. I have interviewed vocational teachers because they are expected to have a sound knowledge of educational reality and hence draw upon personal experience to discuss vocational education. This is supported with the argument that the teacher plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of education and learning (MoELLRA, 2011). Policy-makers strongly believe that "the most important factor in determining how well children do is the quality of teachers and teaching" (DfE, 2010, p. 9). In the European context, vocational teachers are aware of both the worlds of education and work: they are perceived as "the important facilitators of learning and role models of their occupations for young people" (Lasonen & Gordon, 2008, p. 24). Therefore, they would facilitate the understanding of the relation between vocational education and the labour market and society.

1.7 Structure of the research study

The study will be divided into two main parts: (a) the theoretical, which presents an understanding of vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis based on the literature consulted; (b) the analysis and discussion, which presents and discusses findings from the documentary analysis and the interview data. Each part will be organised into four chapters.

With regards to the theoretical part, Chapter 1 introduces the aim and purpose of the study. It provides an initial understanding of the importance of researching the relation between vocational education and social cohesion as well as the relation between social cohesion and the economic crisis. To establish a common understanding of what is presented and discussed, it includes a discussion of the key terms and concepts in the study. This paves the way to establishing the rationale for the study, including the selection of Greece and England as cases. Chapter 2 will provide an understanding of human capital theory framed by the discussion of the purpose of education and schooling in contemporary society. It presents key issues in human capital development through vocational education. These issues include current developments in the vocational tradition, models of vocational education operating in

Europe, and the wider perception of vocational education as a second chance to enter the labour market and to secure employment. Chapter 3 will introduce the social capital theory framed by the discussion of the use of knowledge in the organisation of society. It will (similarly) present key issues in social capital development through vocational education. These issues include the concept of *social competences* in the development of a vocational culture, the wider perception of vocational education as a social unit and the social roles assumed in vocational education. Chapter 4 will delineate the methodology of the study. As such, it will present the research questions which have given direction to the study. Furthermore, it will discuss the methods used to produce the research data and the techniques employed to manage them.

Regarding the analysis and discussion part, Chapter 5 will present the findings from the documentary analysis. It will trace the policy direction for vocational education in the rationale for the proposed reforms to vocational education in Greece and England. To understand motivation for vocational education, it will discuss the linguistic and social construction of the identity of young people as vocational students. It will analyse key issues identified in the selected policy documents. These issues concern the justification for the existence of vocational education, the policy perception of vocational education as a second chance in education and a means of securing employment, and the policy efforts to promote parity of esteem for vocational education. Chapter 6 will present findings from the interview data which address the question of how participant teachers envisage that vocational education can support its students to find their place in the labour market. The discussion will revolve around the following themes: vocational education as a tradition; motivation for vocational education; vocational education as a means of labour market inclusion. Chapter 7 will present findings which address the question of how teachers envisage that vocational education can support its students to find their place in society. The discussion will similarly revolve around three themes: vocational education as a social unit; social roles in vocational education; vocational education as a means of inclusion in society. Chapter 8 will revolve around the value of vocational education in times of economic crisis. It will touch upon issues which cut across the documentary analysis and the interview data, and are related to the notion of parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education.

Chapter 9 will conclude the presentation and discussion of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. It will present the potential contribution of the study to the academic and wider society.

1.8 Concluding

This chapter has presented the envisaged role of vocational education in social cohesion in times of economic crisis at a national and European level. Since the launch of the Copenhagen Process in 2002, the meaning and purpose of vocational education has expanded to include any form and type of learning that takes place before entry into the labour maker and supports learners to enhance their employability skills (Cedefop, 2011). In times of economic disruption and high rates of youth unemployment, vocational education would facilitate readiness of the individual for productivity. Labour market inclusion emerges as a means of addressing social cohesion challenges. A cohesive society is assumed to support equal participation of young people in the education system. In this society, they would develop a sense of acceptance and inclusion which would, in turn, enable them to experience fulfilment and satisfaction from the engagement with activities such as the creation of social ties and employment.

Chapter 2

Understanding the Relation between Vocational Education and the Labour Market: Key Issues in Human Capital Development through Vocational Education

2.1 Introduction

In this study, I will partly explore how vocational education can support its students to prepare for the labour market and hence to accumulate suitable qualifications for employment and productivity. I will discuss how I will use the lens of human capital, the first main pillar of social cohesion, in the analysis of the relation between vocational education and the labour market.

2.2 The purpose of education and schooling in contemporary society

Formal education is portrayed as a mechanism of the state to ensure social and political participation of its citizens. It is envisaged to (mainly) serve a social and political purpose, as reflected and articulated in education policy documents worldwide. Policy-makers address the question of what it means to be a citizen of a society (at a political level) and how that can be demonstrated in everyday life (at a social level), in order to keep that society together.[13] The school then frames the space and time required to fulfil the (main) purpose of education. It is projected as a formal and structured social institution which transmits and accredits the knowledge acquired by learners (Kerchhoff, 2000). In this light, it is the sole institution whose seal makes official but also legitimises the knowledge within a society (Fragkoudaki, 1985). Magalhães and Stoer (2003) take the argument a step further to state that "schooling appears to see much of its relevance confined to its function of accreditation, of distributing diplomas" (p. 52) on the back of which young people would achieve participation in a society. In other words, in the knowledge-based economy and society, schooling appears to be turning into an accreditation body which equips young people with formal qualifications to demonstrate their knowledge and enter the labour market. Young people will use that knowledge to become citizens of the society that surrounds them.

The school in its present form was developed during the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent restructuring of the economy and society. The social and political

---

[13] To give an example, at the World Education Forum 2015 the following was reiterated: "Enabling individuals and communities to adequately address contemporary challenges and establish the conditions for a better future for all must be an essential aim of education" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 15).

changes occurring around that time led to the establishment of the urban class and the promotion of the right of all citizens to be educated and to vote (Carl, 2009; Fragkoudaki, 1985). The school has been considered through the years a "key agent of socialisation" (Preston & Green, 2008, p. 129) of the younger members of a society. In the context of socialisation, students are expected to learn to adapt to a new social environment, acquire a sense of belonging to a social group (determined by the level and type of education), and shape their behaviour in compliance with prevailing social norms (as communicated through the process of learning). According to Fragkoudaki (1985), the knowledge, culture, form of language, principles and values communicated through schooling tend to be selected to meet the prevailing needs of a society. She associates socialisation with integration into the labour market and society, and defines the process as follows:[14]

> The school shapes younger generations to integrate into society, that is, to develop awareness of participation in the nation as a whole, to integrate into the financial system of the organisation and division of labour, and to participate in the political system of the organisation of society. (Fragkoudaki, 1985, p. 17)

In the EU policy context, the national vision for the educated citizen includes some awareness of individual participation in the EU, and responds to current political and social needs. In post-war Europe, and on the road to reconciliation, the vision included the development of *the moral individual* who would contribute to the re-establishment of a (peaceful and) democratic society (Garforth, 1962, p. 49). The concept of *democracy* is constructed on the basis of "the one fundamental assumption of the peculiar value of the individual man and woman" which dictates that "all men and women are equal" (pp. 49, 50). In a democratic society all individuals are equally valued, regardless of differences. Around that time, there was optimism about the direction of society and the role of education in individual development and national growth. Schofer and Meyer (2005) imply that a new model of society emerged from destruction which supported wider participation in education and schooling. It was mainly defined by the establishment of democracy and the promotion of human rights on the one hand, and the preponderance of science over other forms of knowledge on the other. In the course of time, the promotion of education for all children and wider

---

[14] According to Johnson (2000), integration "exists when the relative number of people from various categories found in a neighborhood, school, or other units reflects their proportions in the POPULATION as a whole" (p. 276). The terms *integration* and *inclusion* will be used interchangeably herein, with emphasis on inclusion as opposed to exclusion.

participation in higher education has been considered a contributing factor to the new model of society (Schofer & Meyer, 2005; UNESCO, 2015a).

In times of economic crisis, education retains its significance to the national planning policy and the achievement of economic and social goals. The pressure of globalisation on national and European growth and development signals a shift in the wider vision for the educated citizen, calling for the shaping of *the skilled worker* (European Commission, 2011, p. 9) who will contribute to the economic sustainability and democratic development of the EU. In other words, the vision proposes that European citizens should be educated to make a positive contribution to the labour market (by being skilled) and society (by being employed). It is anticipated that the longer they remain in education, the more the benefits will be for the individual, the economy and society, provided that individuals have equal access to and participation in education (Müller & Kogan, 2010; Sauer & Zagler, 2014). In this direction, countries tend to take policy initiatives to enhance the provision of education "so that it becomes increasingly profitable for more people to stay longer in education and training" (Müller & Kogan, 2010, p. 246). As Müller and Kogan (2010) clarify, longer participation in education can be achieved when individuals know that they can benefit more from education than other forms of investment. In times of economic crisis, when jobs are becoming obsolete or they are disappearing, individuals may be sceptical about remaining longer in education and consider other options, such as employment. On the other side, when countries limit the resources they invest in education (see Chapter 1), state investment in education emerges as a challenge.

Education and schooling prepare young people to be productive workers and citizens in the labour market and society. If in post-war Europe emphasis was placed on the moral individual to promote peace and democracy, Europe in economic crisis would be interested in the skilled worker who is able to address economic challenges on the back of their credentials. In other words, policy interest lies in the enhancement of human capital, a concept which will be discussed next.

2.3 The concept of human capital

The inception of the concept can be traced in the 1960s, when policy interest in identifying if and how the school could secure equal access to educational opportunities led to the commission of relevant social research in the USA.[15] These studies converge

---

[15] Relevant social research includes Coleman's (1966) report on equality of educational opportunity and Jencks' (1972) reassessment of Coleman's findings. If Coleman argues that the promotion of equal

on the discovery of social inequality in student achievement and progression. The human capital theory provided a way of understanding differences in levels of education and income; how the content and market value of the human capital would determine the place of the individual in the labour market. The theory was established by Schultz (1963) and further developed by Becker (1993) who perceive education as an investment in the human being and their potential, and relate it to economic growth (Chanis, 2012). It is an investment of resources in the enhancement of individual talents, knowledge, skills and habits which comprise an asset (or capital) for the individual and the business organisation they work for, measurable in the form of credentials and exchangeable for earnings at an individual and collective level.

Schultz (1963) acknowledges that education means different things for different communities; each community aims to address its culture-specific needs through education. Though needs may differ, the process of fulfilling them tends to be the same, through teaching and learning. Drawing upon the economist Machlup, he compares the school to a business organisation to imply that it operates in a similar way: there is an end product which is schooling. In this light, the school system is perceived as an industry. The inquiry into the value of schooling leads to the argument that there are two functions: *the moral* or cultural and *the vocational* or economic. The moral function is related to the refinement of taste which "gives people real satisfactions" (Schultz, 1963, p. 6). The vocational function is defined as the development of skills to contribute to augmentation of earnings; in other words, "an investment in man" (p. 6). The use of the term *moral* may confirm the need of post-war society to maintain democracy through education and schooling by shaping the moral individual, as discussed by Garforth (1962).

Schultz discerns a dividing line between the cultural and the economic function of schooling, which reflects the wider divide between culture and the economy. Culture and the economy are associated with a way of living, that is, *the art of living* and *the practice of earning a living* respectively. A narrow approach to culture would fail to recognise that it encompasses economic activities: "How people earn their living is in general an integral part of a culture" (Schultz, 1963, p. 7). Cultural practices would be based on economic activities: "expenditures for moral purposes or refinement of taste are not beyond economic analysis" (p. 8).

---

educational provisions may not necessarily contribute to equal educational outcomes, Jencks (and his collaborators) would imply that the promotion of educational equality needs to be complemented by other forms of equality.

Schultz illuminates the meaning of investment when he refers to the outcome from schooling. Students accumulate abilities (or knowledge and skills) in school. They can use these abilities in the labour market to improve their financial situation; they invest their capital in employment. Education then functions as a form of investment which may not be profitable in the case of unemployment. It may fluctuate when individuals of a certain age withdraw from the workforce to return to education or re-enter the labour market when the economy is in recovery. It is perceived as a commodity individuals are happy to invest in, on condition that it is free or "until the return to education was zero" (Schultz, 1963, p. 20). This investment enables learners to discover and enhance their talents (and skills) provided that they have the opportunity to do so. On the other side, it enables them to become adaptable to labour market needs, a process which is associated with economic growth.

Becker (1993) similarly perceives education (and training) as an investment in the human being. He affirms that the capital accrued through education can contribute to augmentation of earnings, regardless of the level of education or the socioeconomic background of the individual. The higher the level of education is, the higher the level of earnings will be. In other words, the longer the individual remains in education, the higher the return on investment (of time, money or effort) will be. The outcome from education would be better for graduates than those who leave education early. In a competitive market, those who have the higher level of knowledge and skills will achieve and progress better. In this light, "young people without a college education are not being adequately prepared for work in modern economy" (Becker, 1993, p. 18).

Becker considers the acquisition of knowledge, skills and the ability to solve problems (through schooling) valuable qualifications for entering the labour market (and society). Qualifications can contribute to the increase of earnings and productivity in two ways. On the one hand, young people can develop qualifications suitable for reaching individual and collective economic security. On the other hand, they can accumulate formal qualifications or credentials to present future employers with "information about the underlying abilities, persistence, and other valuable traits of people" (Becker, 1993, p. 19). The family and the state would play a key role in human capital development through education.

Like Schultz, Becker similarly considers the school to be a form of business organisation. There is a perceived difference between the school and the business organisation: the school is "an institution specializing in the production of training" and the business organisation is "a firm that offers training in conjunction with the

production of goods" (Becker, 1993, p. 51). This is echoed in the argument that schools and businesses "mutually complement one another as places of learning" (BEC, 1995, p. 38). Becker (1993) affirms that there are socioeconomic outcomes from education which can benefit a society, to add that experts "have generally had little success in estimating the social effects of different investments, and, unfortunately, education is no exception" (p. 208).

The theory has received criticism which mainly concerns perspectives on the role of education. There is a line of argument that the perception of education as a contributing factor to economic growth fails to recognise other roles attributed to education (Preston & Green, 2008; Tickly, 2013). In other words, the role of education cannot be limited to investing in the future skilled workforce. Becker appears to recognise that human capital theory fails to consider the social role of the school when he refers to difficulties in measuring social outcomes from education. On the other side, those who follow the screening hypothesis, such as Arrow and Stiglitz (as cited in Chanis, 2012, p. 32), argue that in the hands of employers, education is transformed into a tool for screening and selecting potential employees for their business organisation. Individuals (as future employees) would then use their capital to benefit employers.

The significance of human capital theory lies in the relation between the state and the individual. In order for the individual to accumulate and invest their skills in the labour market and employment, the state is expected to invest in the individual through the provision of equal opportunities in education and the creation of new jobs. It is assumed that vocational education plays a key role in the development of human capital: it permits the development of talents, knowledge, skills and habits which support specialised and immediate preparation for the labour market. The question arises as to whether vocational education can retain this role even in times of economic crisis, government spending cuts and unemployment.

2.4 The development of human capital through VET from the economists' perspective

Having discussed the meaning of human capital, I will now look into the economists' perspective on the development of human capital through VET. This will facilitate the understanding of the relation between vocational education, the labour market and the economy. I will focus on the influential study conducted by Grubb and Ryan (1999) on the evaluation of VET and their conceptualisation of human capital development.

Grubb and Ryan (1999) identify four stages (or outcomes) in the development of human capital development through VET, including vocational education, which they consider to be interconnected: the implementation of a vocational programme, followed by the participation of individuals in the learning process, an action expected to support them to change their economic behaviour in the labour market and subsequently to create long-run employment. If the first two stages concern the participation of learners in vocational education, in order to prepare for the labour market, the remaining two pertain to the participation of workers (or employees) in the labour market, thus illuminating the contributing role of VET in the labour market and the economy.

The starting point is the implementation of a programme organised and structured in a specific way. This programme would have a positive impact on outcomes such as employment and earnings. The second stage involves the learning process which would support learners to increase their knowledge, skills and competences. The incorporation of interpersonal skills into the learning process is expected to enable learners to interact and communicate with others in the workplace effectively. Developing personal traits associated with professional behaviour (such as persistence) would form part of the process. Though teaching and learning practices have been widely explored in the context of academic education, this does not appear to apply to vocational education, not to the same extent.

Completion of a programme ideally leads learners to labour market inclusion; as employees, they can use their newly acquired qualifications to change their behaviour, manage their time more effectively and be more productive. An essential condition for productivity is for individuals to be employed or in the process of getting a job. In the case that they are not employed, "the programme changes the potential productivity on the job so that an employer hires them" (Grubb & Ryan, 1999, p. 15). In other words, individuals may possess the required credentials for the labour market and hence demonstrate readiness for productivity. Attention is drawn to structural factors which may affect employment: "The amplified version of human capital development often appears to assume that individuals participate in smoothly functioning labour market with well-defined jobs that trainees either obtain or fail to obtain" (p. 16). If such an assumption depicts the ideal structure of the labour market, then in reality, individuals may be expected to take on greater responsibility for employment. As such, "the process of getting a job may involve creating a job by identifying potential opportunities, obtaining the necessary capital, and otherwise creating a position as a small-scale entrepreneur" (p. 16).

When individuals succeed in changing their economic behaviour, they may enjoy tangible outcomes from vocational education with a positive effect on their productivity as well as the productivity of others and the business organisation. With regards to non-economic outcomes, these would concern mainly young people and the way they take care of themselves and interact with others. It is highlighted that "where employment is critical in defining a person's identity and generating income, a variety of non-economic benefits flow from employment" (Grubb & Ryan, 1999, p. 16). In contemporary society, work assumes a key role in the construction of identity and the feeling of inclusion through relationships with others. Harpaz and Fu (2002) suggest that the meaning of work tends to be affected by changes in society, to specify that work is currently associated with "self-esteem, fulfilment, identity, social interaction, and status" (p. 640). Along the same lines, Palios (2003) argues that work can have a determining impact on the construction of identity and the process of socialisation. The 2011 Cedefop study on benefits from VET confirms that achieving employment through VET can yield both tangible and non-tangible benefits. Non-tangible outcomes pertaining to human capital development include the promotion of health (when individuals take care of themselves) and the prevention of antisocial behaviour (when interacting with others). Such outcomes reveal a broader conceptualisation of human capital to include the relation to the self and others.

2.5 The development of human capital through VET from the educationists' perspective

I will explore the educationists' perspective on the development of human capital through VET, with the research interest in vocational education. Billet (2011) underlines that "its diversity in terms of its purposes, institutions, participants and programmes stands as being one of its key and defining characteristics" (p. 3). To manage this diversity, I will focus on aspects of vocational education which illuminate the content of the capital that vocational students can accrue. As such, I will present current developments in and models of vocational education in Europe. I will then touch upon perceptions of vocational education as a second chance to get educated and qualified, and a means of securing employment. These aspects are expected to point to the envisaged direction of vocational education in times of economic crisis.

2.5.1 Current developments in the vocational tradition

Formal education in Europe has been traditionally divided into two broad learning pathways: the academic (or general) and the vocational. Each traditional pathway is widely expected to lead to the delivery of distinct learning contents and outcomes, with the academic being closely associated with theoretical learning and the pursuit of higher studies, and the vocational with practical learning and the pursuit of specialised and immediate employment (European Commission, 2011; Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Pring, 2007). If during the Industrial Revolution, vocational education would prepare young people for crafts and trades, in the knowledge-based economy it offers preparation for occupations and careers. Since the launch of the Copenhagen Process in 2002, there have been systematic policy attempts to bridge the divide between academic education and vocational education; the economic crisis may be contributing to the perpetuation of distinct traditions.

Though there are two distinct learning pathways available for young people to build their human capital, vocational education has not widely established its position in the mainstream or conventional education. This appears to have affected the direction of its development and its appeal to young people. This is reflected in the conceptualisation of vocational education as a transition system to the labour market. Iannelli and Raffe (2007) identify two main types of transition in terms of the strength of the relation between vocational education and the labour market: the employment logic and the educational logic (p. 50), and recognise variation to these types. Where the relation is stronger, the *employment logic* prevails. This means that vocational education may not be considered part of the mainstream education, whilst young people choose to pursue employment through vocational education rather than higher (academic) education. The reason is that employers tend to express trust in holders of vocational qualifications. Where the relation is weaker, the *educational logic* underpins transition. Vocational education is organised in a similar way to academic education, thus forming a pillar of the mainstream education and providing young people with the opportunity to access the university. Employers tend to express interest in higher levels of knowledge and qualifications, traditionally associated with academic (or higher) education. Given that both academic education and vocational education lead their students to employment, it is clarified that the relation between them "is defined more by its lower status than by its stronger orientation to employment" (Iannelli & Raffe, 2007, p. 51). Where vocational education enjoys lower status, "abler students choose academic programmes in order to avoid stigmatization" (p. 51). The meaning of vocational

education is then defined by its standing in the labour market and society rather than the content of study: it is the learning pathway which widely bears the stigma of lower ability and lower educational status, leading to employment of lower economic and social status.

In an attempt to raise the attractiveness of vocational education (as part of VET) in Europe, and possibly challenge stigmatisation of vocational students, EU policy-makers call for the widening of vocational opportunities in education and work.[16] Vocational students are considered "learners with less interest in academic study;" it is proposed that vocational education should provide them with knowledge and skills "that are essential for many jobs and also open doors to higher-level qualifications" (European Commission, 2011, pp. 3-4). Besides perceived differences in their status, academic education and vocational education differ in the purpose of the transmitted knowledge. Canning (2012) specifies that vocational knowledge is characterised by its usefulness. Winch (2013) offers a more detailed account of its purpose when he discusses the relation between different types of knowledge and their relevance to vocational education. Starting with the relation between *know-how* and *know-that*, he indicates that the state of know-how defines the current vocational tradition, as opposed to the state of know-that which he considers "critical to the understanding of co-operation and autonomous action in the workplace" (Winch, 2013, p. 282). If in the first case individuals have the ability to do something and demonstrate that when they perform a task, in the second case they have the knowledge of doing something. He discerns two different types of know-how: being able to give an account of how to do something and *knowing a way* of doing something, thus mastering a technique (pp. 284-285).

Billet (2011) argues that there are two interconnected aspects of employment preparation: young people would prepare *towards* an occupation as well as *for* an occupation. The first step is for students to identify the occupation that suits their personality and meets their future goals. Should they fail to do so, this tends to be considered loss on investment (in education) for the individual and society, thus limiting the development of human capital. Preparing *towards* an occupation is projected as a means for young people to develop an identity; to validate themselves. Gaining work experience emerges as a step towards validation: "This would include what is required for the occupation to be practised effectively and what it actually entails on a daily

---

[16] According to Lasonen and Gordon (2008), attractiveness refers to "preferences, attitudes and related behaviour of individuals and groups" (p. 13).

basis" (Billet, 2011, p. 241). Once they have identified what suits them, young people would get qualified *for* engaging in that occupation which offers them satisfaction. Billet (2011) specifies that "such engagement is the kind through which individuals' sense of vocation most likely arises" (p. 242).

Acquiring credentials for the occupation of choice may be one more source of satisfaction: it certifies the ability and readiness to practise that occupation. Kerckhoff (2000) sounds sceptical about the range of employment opportunities available for vocational students on the back of their credentials. A comparison is drawn between the USA and Europe leading to the conclusion that in the USA, credentials at upper secondary level tend to be more general and not strictly associated with a particular occupation, whilst in Europe, the education system generally awards "credentials that have important occupational relevance" (Kerckhoff, 2000, p. 458). It is argued, "The more specificity of the credentials, the greater the likelihood that a young person's entry into the labor force will be limited to particular occupations" (p. 459). The more specific their vocational preparation is, the more limited the outcomes will be.

Such scepticism directs attention to the content of vocational preparation and encourages reflection on whether vocational education limited to occupation-based preparation can be considered education. Instead of being educated in various aspects of life, it appears that young people may be trained towards or for an occupation. Furthermore, it illuminates a perceived paradox in vocational preparation. On the one hand, there is a European call for member states to widen educational and employment opportunities for all young people. On the other hand, vocational education retains that part of its traditional role targeted at specific and immediate employment. Though academic learning is integrated into vocational learning, the degree of occupational relevance may limit academic integration and subsequently life opportunities; hence vocational students may develop limited human capital.

With regards to human capital development, the content of the capital available for vocational students is projected as useful for the individual student and the labour market. It embodies the ability to perform tasks successfully, an asset considered more important than the knowledge of the theory behind it. Furthermore, it embodies the mastery of a technique relevant to the vocational area of study. Human capital can be targeted at preparation towards choosing an occupation or preparation for practising the occupation of choice. In comparison with the capital acquired through academic education, the vocational capital appears to bear the stigma of lower status and lower ability, particularly where it can be used to claim access to higher education. Its value

may be determined by the model of vocational education followed in each EU member state, as briefly discussed next.

2.5.2 Models of vocational education in Europe

In *The Role of Vocational Education and Training in Enhancing Social Inclusion and Cohesion*, Preston and Green (2008, pp. 136-142) identify five models of vocational education. For convenience, they will be classified into the prevailing (to include the market, the social and the state model), and the peripheral (to include the southern and the transitional model). The term *peripheral* is used herein to delineate the geopolitical position of these models.

The *market model* in the United Kingdom (England) aims at competence acquisition and employability. This means that vocational students acquire skills which enable them to be competent to find and remain in employment on the one hand, and contribute to the development and growth of the market on the other. The individual is thus expected to make a contribution to the labour market and society. At lower secondary level, vocational provision functions as an incentive for pupils to remain in education. It offers a holistic approach to learning on the basis of vocational learning blended with personal presentation skills such as confidence (White & Laczik, 2016, p. 25). The *social model* (in the Nordic countries) focusses on the development of civic skills through occupational socialisation;[17] enhancement of corporatism and subsequent distribution of power emerges as a desired outcome.[18] Vocational students therefore develop skills which enable them "to understand, explain, compare, and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship" (Patrick, 1997, p. 2). The *state model* (in France) places emphasis on values and character formation, leading to the strengthening of the national identity.

The *southern model* indicates that the appeal of vocational education in the Mediterranean countries is not high. In the case of Greece, academic (or scientific) knowledge has been traditionally praised within education and society. As Papoutsanis (2013) points out, even in times of economic crisis, parents wish for their children *to put the bracelet on*, a colloquialism which means to obtain a university degree as a guarantee for better prospects in life. On the other side, the *transitional model* refers to

---

[17] The term refers to the conceptualisation of occupation as "contexts of socialisation and identity formation". They would provide "a frame for orienting life plans, however, only as far as the occupation serves as a vehicle for social status and for realizing individual interests and competences" (Rauner & Maclean, 2008, p. 482).

[18] Corporatism refers to "a system of distributing power in a SOCIETY among various organizations such as the STATE, TRADE UNIONS, corporations, and professional associations" (Johnson, 2000, p. 63).

the provision of vocational education in Southeastern European countries prior to their transition to the market economy. It offered "a unique form of vocational socialisation" because it focussed on the "all round development of the pupil's personality" (Shatkin, as cited in Preston & Green, 2008, p. 141).

The identified models of vocational education address different economic and social needs stemming from different perspectives on the meaning of becoming a citizen through vocational education. Where the economy is driven by employment and economic performance, vocational education is expected to foster social cohesion by preparing young people to enter the labour market and to make a contribution to society. On the other side, where the direction of vocational education is not determined by employment or where there is shared responsibility for economic performance, vocational education tends to equally prepare for social activities other than employment. In any case, linking students to the labour market is a priority for vocational education in Europe.

2.5.3 Vocational education as a second chance to get educated and qualified

Vocational education is projected as a second chance to get educated and qualified, thus contributing to the promotion of social justice through the education system. It provides individuals with a chance to accrue human capital suitable for progression into education and work; a second chance for those who have not completed compulsory schooling and seek the opportunity to do so. Bell (2007) stresses that "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (p. 1) is the goal of social justice through education. Vocational students have the chance to participate in formal education and access equal opportunities with academic students for labour market inclusion and subsequently social inclusion. Contrary to academic students, they form a diverse group of learners defined by heterogeneity, a fact which raises concerns about the possibility to complete their vocational studies and benefit from the goal of social justice.

Karmel and Woods (2008) argue that VET, including vocational education, is widely considered a second chance for individuals to get educated and hence qualified.[19] Vocational learners tend to be "individuals who have not followed the conventional academic pathway of school completion followed by post-school study"

---

[19] This is not to be confused with the second chance schools which operate within the EU framework for second chance education and deliver both academic and vocational courses. For more information, see E2C-Europe (2016).

(Karmel & Woods, 2008, p. 7). To address the objectives of their study, they have classified vocational learners into two age groups: those aged 24 and under, who happen to participate in apprenticeship programmes to a considerable extent, and those aged over 24. Though they have not included learners at upper secondary level, they accept the plausibility of the argument that "young people participating in VET while at school are accessing second-chance VET before leaving school" (p. 11). It is this plausibility that made to include their study in the theoretical part of my study. The fact that vocational education does not always form part of the mainstream education makes it obvious that this is widely viewed as a second chance for young people to get educated and qualified. Tabrizi (2014) refers to the 2011 Wolf report on the review of 14-19 vocational education to point out as follows: "Vocational education is coming further into mainstream education policy discourse" (p. 1), thus leading to the assumption that academic education remains the first chance for learners, regardless of age and stage of education.

The wider assumption that vocational education offers individuals a second chance in education and work implies that it is ascribed a compensatory role: to deliver social justice for those who have not obtained (formal) qualifications through academic education. Grubb and Ryan (1999) argue that "a great deal of remedial training is viewed as a second-chance system for individuals who have failed in the first-chance educational system" (p. 11). Failure in academic education may lead the individual to vocational education where they would have the chance to achieve and progress, and subsequently participate in life on the back of their vocational qualifications. Billet (2011) ascertains that the delivery of social justice through vocational education is associated with "the capacity to secure personal emancipation and progression" in a society. He specifies the following:

> In particular, providing individuals with the kinds of capacities through which they can extend themselves perhaps beyond the constraints of the circumstances into which they were born, and also unsatisfactory or unsuccessful experiences in compulsory education, is a clear social justice goal for vocational education. (Billet, 2011, p. 173)

The goal of social justice would be fulfilled when individuals turn opportunities into outcomes, regardless of their socioeconomic background. With regards to the use of the attributive adjectives *unsatisfactory* and *unsuccessful*, it appears to unfold two aspects of educational failure. On the one hand, learners may have failed the academic system

and hence have unsuccessful experiences. On the other hand, the academic system may have failed them, thus leaving them with unsatisfactory experiences. In any case, these experiences would be embodied in their human capital.

The question arises as to whether this second chance for individuals to get educated and qualified is fruitful. Karmel and Woods (2008) reach the conclusion that a second chance in education does not necessarily mean that all vocational learners will acquire a formal qualification. In the EU policy context, there is concern about the percentage of young people in vocational education who fail to complete their studies. This is reflected in the following statement:

> Vocational education offers a very wide range of fields and tends to attract students who prefer non-academic learning. For these reasons, it can help to reintegrate school-leavers into education. Yet this very variety and greater inclusiveness of VET – which, unlike general education, includes programmes open to low performers – is also what makes dropout more likely. (Cedefop, 2013, p. 2)

The quotation above acknowledges vocational education as a second chance mainly for individuals who have dropped out of the academic system without obtaining qualifications or who do not perform well academically. It provides its learners with the chance to get included in education and life, and fulfil the goal of social justice. Vocational education emerges as a learning environment which is more inclusive than academic education and embraces diversity in performance. Yet it is this very characteristic which raises scepticism about the process of inclusion and hence the nature of vocational education. Though it provides learners with the opportunity to challenge failure, it may fail to keep them together and operate as a community (of learners) where they feel accepted. It is assumed that the element of diversity is considered a challenge for vocational education.

2.5.4 Vocational education as a means of securing employment

Vocational education is perceived as an effective means of securing employment by meeting skills needs of the labour market. The human capital developed through vocational education embodies useful skills for productivity and economic growth at an individual and collective level. Despite differences in organisation and structure, national systems of vocational education converge on the need to strengthen labour market relevance and support vocational students to meet skills needs; hence enable them to become employable and productive. The range of vocational areas and

specialties available for young people tend to correspond to sectors of the national economy. The need for a stronger link between vocational education and the labour market emerges as an urgent matter in times of economic crisis. In this direction, EU policy-makers call member states to assign to employers a more active and decisive role in the vocational preparation of young people (Cedefop, 2014b; European Commission, 2011).

To secure entry into the labour market, vocational students need to possess knowledge and skills which are considered essential for employers. At the World Education Forum 2015 the following would be declared: "Skills for work have to be labour-oriented and consider tripartite involvement of government, employers and employees organizations" (UNESCO, 2015b, p. 20). In England, qualifications such as the short-lived Diplomas appear to have been developed with the aim to promote the integration of academic and vocational skills on the one hand, and to encourage engagement of employers on the other (see Chapter 1). Preston and Green (2008) point out that such initiatives are part of the policy attempt to acknowledge the fact "that employers did require some generic or transferable skills from new employees, above all the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, listening to instructions, punctuality and so on" (p. 139). Hippach-Schneider, Weighel, Brown and Gonon (2013) reach a similar conclusion about skills needs of companies. In their study, they examine whether companies in three European countries, including England, prefer to recruit higher education graduates to holders of initial vocational qualifications (including apprenticeships). They conclude that overall, employers have greater trust in individuals who possess *hybrid* qualifications, those based on "learning at colleges/universities and in the workplace with the student and the enterprise being bound by an employment/training contract" (Hippach-Schneider, Weighel, Brown, & Gonon, 2013, p. 8).

In times of economic crisis, vocational education may be failing its role to ensure employment for its students. Though young people get educated and qualified to meet skills needs of the labour market, the process of getting included in the labour market gets harder and harder. Contemporary society is "characterized by youth unemployment and skill mismatches" (Molz, 2015, p. 4); the alarmingly high rates of youth unemployment in Europe have unveiled the phenomenon of skills mismatch. McGuinness and Pouliakas (2016) identify two cases of skills mismatch: overskilling and overeducation. The term *overskilling* refers to "the phenomena whereby workers are unable to use a range of their skills and abilities in their current job" (McGuinness &

Pouliakas, 2016, p. 2). They may possess the necessary capital for that job but may not be able to use it at work. The term *overeducation* indicates "the phenomena whereby workers have acquired a level of schooling in excess of what is required to either get or do a job" (p. 2). This may leave them with feelings of lack of appreciation for the capital they possess. It is underlined that this may be the case of "workers who, despite having higher than average levels of formally acquired human capital (schooling), have lower levels of human capital acquired in the workplace (e.g. non-formal training and informal on-the-job learning)," (p. 6; brackets in original).

In times of economic crisis, skills mismatch reveals a pressing need of the individual to achieve economic security through employment, regardless of whether it permits fulfilment or satisfaction. Being able to use at work the range of skills the individual possesses, or to feel appreciated at work, or to find a job relevant to their credentials may not be the intended outcome of participation in VET. In the case of unemployment, vocational credentials demonstrate readiness for the labour market. This readiness would serve as an integral element of social cohesion: members of a society assume responsibility for their employment, make limited use of the welfare system and subsequently support the cohesiveness of the society that surrounds them. They invest their resources in adapting their behaviour to the labour market needs and developing the ability to be productive.

2.6 Concluding

Vocational education is projected as an investment in the human being: the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour acquired to facilitate inclusion in the labour market on the one hand, and contribution to productivity and economic growth on the other. This investment could be a second chance for young people disengaged from academic education to get educated and qualified, respond to the needs of the labour market and secure employment. In times of economic crisis, vocational education is assumed to function as a net to collect qualifications which are suitable for employment and promise to offer economic security.

Chapter 3

Understanding the Relation between Vocational Education and Society: Key Issues in Social Capital Development through Vocational Education

3.1 Introduction

In this study, I will partly explore how vocational education can support its students to prepare for society and hence for coexistence in life through social ties with their teachers and peers, as developed in the classroom or the workshop. I will therefore discuss how I will use the lens of social capital, the second main pillar of social cohesion, in the analysis of the relation between vocational education and society.

3.2 The use of knowledge in the organisation of society

Knowledge emerges as part of the glue that keeps individuals and societies together. It enables individuals to know how to identify with others, create bonds and get included in society. There are two main approaches to the use of knowledge in the organisation of society: the functionalist and the class struggle approach (or currently the neo-Marxist approach). If the first approach ascribes to knowledge a role in preserving social order and hence social cohesion, the second approach challenges their purpose and need. In the course of time, interdependence among individuals and societies would become evident; a new model of society would emerge, this time, driven by the need to enhance and distribute knowledge. In a knowledge-driven society, the level and value of knowledge is anticipated to determine the positioning of individuals in life. Issues touched upon in Chapter 2 will be reiterated in Chapter 3; this is expected to highlight potential overlaps between human capital (represented by the labour market) and social capital (represented by society).

An influential study which illuminates the relation between knowledge and society is *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* by Lyotard (1979/1984, pp. 11-15) who discusses two opposing approaches to this relation: the functionalist and the class struggle approach. To explain the functionalist approach, he draws upon the work of Parsons who perceives society as *a functional whole* supported by *a self-regulating system*; individuals adhere to rules and norms developed within that system. Knowledge would be used to achieve certain levels of performance and make a certain contribution to (the economy and) society. To explain the class struggle approach, he

refers to Marx and his followers who view society as *a duality*, as being divided into two social classes. Struggles within a society would be reflected in struggles to control knowledge and its supporting system, including education. If the first approach has homogeneity and functionality at its heart, the second approach signals the duality of society and knowledge. With regards to social cohesion, the functionalist approach points to the significance of social bonds, as formed through homogeneity. On the other side, the class struggle approach challenges the existence of social bonds, thus indicating that social cohesion may be a futile concept. Lyotard (1979/1984) refutes such an argument when he proclaims that "no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before" (p. 15).[20] Knowledge would therefore determine the way individuals exist in relationships.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, it is proclaimed that *no country is an island*, a phrase used to highlight global interdependence at an economic and social level (see Skilling & Boven, 2005; The Economist, 2007). In the EU policy context, the need of the EU to safeguard the position on the map of globalisation and subsequent competitiveness leads to the development of a new model of society driven by knowledge and framed by the domineering neoliberal discourse (Kuhn, 2007; Patrick, 2013). The proposition that the EU should become the most competitive economy and society worldwide introduces the concept of *a knowledge-based society* which complements the knowledge-based economy and bestows power upon knowledge holders. Individuals tend to be classified into two social groups: those with a higher level and those with a lower level of knowledge. Knowledge would turn into "a tool for positioning individuals on (or excluding them from) the labour market" (Magalhães & Stoer, 2003, pp. 43-44; brackets in original). Brine (2006) clarifies that the concepts of *the economy* and *society* are not used interchangeably; they may affect each other's development but they will be linked to a different level of knowledge. The labour market (as an aspect of the economy) will demand a higher level of knowledge to facilitate entry and progression. On the other side, though the less educated may find it harder to get included in the labour market, they will find it easier to feel part of a society. As such, they are considered to be at risk of some exclusion from the labour market and represent some risk to society, particularly when unemployed.

---

[20] Interconnectedness between individuals has been recognised as early as in Donne's (1624) work and the following passage: "No man is an island, entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (The Literature Network, 2016).

In the knowledge-driven society in Europe, the promotion of *academic excellence* as well as personal and social development has lost its prominence to individual performance and *maximization of results* (Magalhães & Stoer, 2003, pp. 43, 45). To achieve performance, the individual needs to acquire knowledge and skills which correspond to the division of labour in society and are transferable within the production process. Besides being aware of their national and European identity, the educated citizen in Europe needs to be employable. Edwards and Ogilvie (2002) assert that employability is a pressing need, possibly stemming from the perceived difficulty of the less educated to secure their position in the knowledge-driven labour market, as opposed to the more educated. Becoming a lifelong learner is described as an opportunity for the less educated to raise their level of knowledge and enhance their employability. Among them are the early school leavers and the unemployed youth, whose learning needs are usually confined to "basic skills, skills to increase inclusion, vocational education, basic social skills and skills to increase entrepreneurship and increase employability" (Brine, 2006, p. 661). Vocational education emerges as a means of supporting the vulnerable youth, defined as those who possess a lower level of knowledge and have the experience of exclusion, to overcome barriers to economic and social inclusion.

In contemporary society, there is a perceived binary opposition in terms of level of knowledge. On the one hand, there are those who possess a higher level of knowledge; on the other hand, there are those with a lower level of knowledge. Being less educated is conceptualised as a negative trait which may contribute to the experience of exclusion from the labour market and eventually society. The policy argument that the less educated may put themselves or others at risk reveals concerns about the possibility of coexistence on equal terms. As indicated in Chapter 2, students at upper secondary level are placed in binary opposition: they are academic or non-academic (vocational). In other words, what one group of learners is the other is not. If vocational students bear the stigma of lower status and lower ability, academic students do not. Such opposition may affect the way young people perceive and interact with each other.

3.3 The concept of social capital

Three influential approaches to social capital have been established by Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam, based on different perspectives on society (ONS, 2001; Tzanakis, 2013). On the understanding that social capital development is based on social networks

and social ties (or social bonds), Bourdieu indicates that actors (individuals or organisations) participate and develop ties in a network with a specific purpose in mind: to acquire economic and/or social benefits. Coleman conceives of social capital as a mechanism to form social ties through networks and maintain some structure in life. Putnam perceives social capital as a tool for collaboration on the basis of ties and trust. Bourdieu appears to follow the neo-Marxist approach to society, thus touching upon struggles over resources, benefits and power, whilst Putnam adopts the neoliberal practice, whereby collaboration is defined by effectiveness and equity (Davies, as cited in ONS, 2001, p. 8). Coleman appears to stand between them, theoretically rooted in rational action or choice (ONS, 2001, p. 8). This means that members of a network abide by rules and address challenges in a rational way (see Johnson, 2000).

Bourdieu (1986) identifies three types of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. The last two stem from economic capital through the process of change. Where there is return on investment in one type of capital, there is cost for another. Social capital is defined as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Individuals who belong to the same network form relationships which may provide them with both tangible and non-tangible benefits. Being aware of the possibility of benefits from their participation in a network may lead members to building solidarity: "The profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible" (p. 249).

Sociability forms part of social capital: "The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 250). Establishing and maintaining relationships is therefore an ongoing process which permits the exchange of information, help and affirmation. Social capital development may be the outcome of a strategy, aiming at utility consciously or unconsciously, at an individual or collective level. Members can enjoy reciprocity in the form of rights and responsibilities. To participate in a network, individuals need to meet set criteria to secure the homogeneity of a group. When a new member becomes part of a network, there may be challenges to the operation of that network, including issues related to power distribution within the network. Networks tend to have a leader and followers engaged in an ongoing distribution of power, whereby conflicts over resources and

benefits may occur, and tension over misuse of power may point to the need of resolution.

Cultural capital is closely linked to social capital and matters of accessing educational opportunities and getting included in a society. Given that the topic of my research touches upon opportunities in formal education and their contribution to social cohesion, I decided to briefly introduce Bourdieu's conceptualisation of cultural capital. Elements of cultural capital will find their place in the analysis and discussion of the research data.

The concept of *cultural capital* contributes to an understanding of inequality in education in terms other than human capital. Bourdieu argues that inequality pertains to differences in the individual collection of symbolic objects, ranging from skills to certificates, which tend to be acquired within the social setting individuals are born into. Three interconnected forms of cultural capital can be discerned (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243): the embodied, the objectified and the institutionalised form. The *embodied form* refers to the process of internalising symbolic objects such as a local accent. Such a process requires time and work on oneself. The *objectified form* implies that the embodied element can turn into a tangible object which can then be possessed and appropriated; an example is books. The *institutionalised form* reveals the degree of power embodied in the material object owned by the individual. In the case of credentials, any certificate reveals the level of knowledge and associated power of the individual to achieve certain goals. This allows for comparison and added value to the acquired capital. The cultural capital of the family, which includes their disposition to education and learning passed from one generation to the next, can affect the individual's place in education and life. In this light, those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds may be less familiar with the value of culture and education, and invest less time in cultural capital development. On the other side, those from advantaged backgrounds may invest more time in cultural capital enhancement. Success in school indicates that students possess the required cultural capital and hence they are positively disposed towards education and learning. The notion of *being able* or *being talented* is not considered neutral; rather, "the ability or talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital" (p. 244).

Coleman (1988) conceptualises social capital on the basis of human capital and explores its significance for the individual. The field of exploration is education and schooling. The concept of *social capital* embodies "a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they

facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure" (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). Social capital is thus created in social structures (such as social networks) and enables individuals to share the resources they have access to, in order to perform certain activities and meet certain goals. To share resources successfully, they need to trust each other and have values in common.

There is a perceived difference between social capital and other types of capital: the former "inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). If social capital is the outcome of collective action, those other types of capital dictate individual action. With regards to the relation between social capital and human capital, he affirms that both types of capital can support the individual to make some change in their life. Human capital "is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways" (p. S100). This means that human capital development directly affects the individual. In the case of social capital, it "comes about through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action" (p. S100). Social capital development therefore affects the way individuals relate to each other.

Coleman highlights three aspects of social capital: trustworthiness, information and norms. Trustworthiness enables individuals to address obligations and expectations in any social structure. When an individual benefits another person, they trust that there will be reciprocity: they expect that the other person will meet their obligation towards them. Information channels sustained through social networks facilitate access to resources. Norms concern the behaviour of members of a social structure. Where norms are not followed, there may be sanctions, internal (imposed by the individual on themselves) or external (imposed by others). Two elements facilitate social capital development: "closure of social networks" (Coleman, 1988, p. S105), as in close-knit networks, and a sense of belonging to a network.

Two broad social settings for social capital development can be identified: the family and what is outside, in the community that surrounds them. In the case of students, it will be the community that surrounds the school (or college) they attend. A family with low human capital may share a high level of social capital in the form of strong social ties. If Bourdieu views differences in types of capital in a causal relation, Coleman discerns an element of compensation in the relation. The school emerges as a formal social network which permits its members to share the same space on a daily basis, and subsequently develop social ties. Teachers and students would then share social capital on the basis of trust in and expectations from each other. In the school

community, students would share a sense of belonging: "there exists a high degree of closure among peers, who see each other daily, have expectations toward each other, and develop norms about each other's behavior" (Coleman, 1988, p. S106).

Putnam (1995, 2000) considers social ties and civic engagement to be contributing factors to the democratic and socioeconomic development of communities. The concept of social capital embeds "features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). Mutual benefits stem from "connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Social capital facilitates social connections when communities are underpinned by the values of trust and reciprocity. In such a community, problems can be resolved more easily and continuity of collaboration leading to development can be secured. Furthermore, the individual identifies themselves with others and enjoys a sense of belonging to that community (Putnam, 1995).

The level of social capital is intertwined with the level of civic engagement: the more individuals get involved in collective action, the more they benefit from social capital development. Social connectedness is regarded as key to engagement in democracy: when social norms are internalised, community members remain connected. Social networks are divided into formal, such as unions, and informal, such as family and neighbours. The level of tolerance among community (or network) members may affect the individual. Where the level is higher, emphasis may be placed on the individual identity. On the other side, where the level is lower, the significance of the collective identity may be promoted (Putnam, 2000).

Civic disengagement may negatively affect social capital and weaken social ties. One of the factors affecting social capital development is geographical mobility. Putnam (1995) highlights the importance of being rooted in one place and having a stable community life when he states the following: "Mobility…tends to disrupt root systems, and it takes time for an unrooted individual to put down new roots" (p. 74). In other words, it takes time to develop a sense of belonging to a community or network. In times of economic crisis, work mobility as a type of geographical mobility is projected as a means of tackling unemployment (Cort, 2011). European citizens would be encouraged to consider moving to a place where there are more (and probably better) employment opportunities. Though work mobility may enable individuals to use and enhance their human capital through inclusion in the labour market, it may not secure social capital development and the inclusion in the local community. They may have the

knowledge required to feel socially included but not the ties to enjoy a sense of connectedness. Efforts to increase one type of capital may lead to the reduction of another.

Putnam (2000) identifies two main forms of social capital: bonding and bridging differences. Where bonding takes places, individuals can develop social capital on the basis of common characteristics or interests. Where bridging occurs, individuals can create social ties by accepting and overcoming their differences. The difference between these two forms of capital is encapsulated in the following statement: "Bonding capital is good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity….Bridging networks, by contrast, are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion" (p. 22). Bonding social capital defines a more exclusive and homogeneous community, whilst bridging social capital is associated with inclusivity and heterogeneity: "bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves" (p. 23). In this light, the school can be considered a social setting which supports bridging among students from different backgrounds.

Based on the above, reciprocity in the form of trust and expectations emerges as a common element in social capital development. If Bourdieu views the creation of social networks as a means of achieving targeted benefits and empowering possibilities in a society, Putnam and Coleman imply that the creation of social ties through social networks can have value in its own right. Individuals can form networks and ties to develop that sense of belonging which generates satisfaction and fulfilment. Scepticism about the outcome from social capital development concerns issues related to measurement. If human capital can be measured in an objective manner, as in the form of credentials, earnings and job titles, the same does not apply to social ties in bonding and bridging. Heikkinen (2004) rebuts the argument about measurement when she states that "the individualist approach only allows this at individual level" (p. 234). Social capital refers to how individuals relate to each other to create shared capital in the form of social ties. Therefore, it benefits the members of a relationship, a group, a network or a community. What may differ is the level of benefit in the form of satisfaction and fulfilment; such feelings are subjective.

3.4 The concept of social competences in the development of the vocational culture

The concept of *social competences* has found a prominent place in the European discourse of education and work; in particular, VET. It highlights the nature of

education and work in an economy and society driven by knowledge: individuals learn and work together by creating and sharing knowledge (Colley, James, Diment, & Tedder, 2003; Gougoulakis, 2012; Lindgren & Heikkinen, 2004). If these two social activities were an individual process in the past, now they form part of a collective process. Individuals learn together in classrooms or workshops, and work together indoors or outdoors, in person or online. As such, they need to be competent to form and sustain relationships and networks, personal and professional; to create and share social capital. The development of social competences is incorporated into the vocational culture and the process of learning to identity with the occupation of choice. To illuminate the relation between social capital, social competences and vocational culture, I will refer to two influential studies conducted by Heikkinen (2004) and Colley et al. (2003).

The importance of social competences in the world of work is reflected in advertisements of job vacancies: social competences are central to job descriptions, regardless of the discipline or specialty required (Goougoulakis, 2012). Being socially competent indicates that the individual can work in a team and contribute to the creation of shared knowledge. They can develop networks and information channels beneficial to the individual, their colleagues and the business organisation; a sense of inclusion would be included in the benefits. Heikkinen (2004) has reservations about the meaning of inclusion. She refers to the operation of business organisations to illuminate the complexity of concepts such as inclusion and exclusion. Labour market inclusion (on the basis of social competences) does not necessarily denote inclusion in an organisation. Being included in a business organisation means that the individual can demonstrate "commitment to organisational mission or vision and sharing knowledge or knowledge creating actions" (Heikkinen, 2004, p. 246). Business organisations are therefore projected as a close-knit network defined by closure (see Coleman, 1988); the individual employee would enjoy a sense of inclusion when they overcome the barrier of closure.

Heikkinen addresses the question of who is socially competent when she draws upon data collected and processed during the implementation of two EU-funded projects she led over the period of 1995-2001. Participants in the two projects are practitioners in education and work, who discuss social competences in the context of VET. Participants in the first project indicate that there are two types of socially competent workers. The first type refers to those who view work as a collective process and consider it important to get on well with others. The second type includes those

who demonstrate social responsibility towards others in terms of their work. Participants in the second project point to a link between the development of social competences and the process of reaching occupational growth. They identify three aspects of this process. In a nutshell, the individual may feel validated when they incorporate defining elements of the practice of their occupation into their main identity. They may develop a sense of belonging to a community of practice by identifying themselves with others within that community. They may dedicate themselves to meeting the needs of others and protecting their wellbeing. In other words, collective needs gain prominence in the interaction with others.

Colley et al. (2003) discuss the process of learning in further education with the focus on vocational areas of study. Preparation for the labour market and the practice of the occupation of study embodies learning to identify with that occupation; to assume the identity of the practitioner of that occupation. Identity learning forms part of the vocational culture and the underlying ideology. To be more precise, the vocational culture embodies learning to become *the right person for the job* (Colley et al., 2003, p. 488), a process which may pertain to all vocational areas operating in colleges. The development of the right identity for the job dictates the way "one should properly feel, look and act, as well as the values, attitudes and beliefs that one should espouse" (p. 488). The content of learning therefore includes the development of social competences which support socialisation to the occupation of choice. Becoming the right practitioner would entail the meaning of becoming the right member for a society, competent in the interaction with other members and in assisting them to benefit from the right practice of their occupation.

Colley et al. relate the process of becoming to the transformation of one's identity. Vocational learners have their own backgrounds and experiences when they engage in learning; their history may affect their learning. What they learn within the vocational education context may shape their identity. The argument that the choice of an occupation depends on the individual and their personality is refuted. Rather than preparing towards an occupation (see Billet, 2011) and obtaining the required credentials for its pursuit, vocational learners would become a different person to practise a particular occupation. They would transform their identity within a system of relationships and practices, and through their interaction with others.

The enhancement of social competences through vocational education as part of VET is crystallised in the development of a vocational culture which promotes learning to identify with the occupation of choice (and practice). The process of becoming the

right person for the labour market and subsequently society covers three broad steps. The vocational learner develops a sense of self in terms of the occupation of study. They identify themselves with other members of the same community of practice, an identification which generates a sense of belonging. They practise social responsibility by attending to the needs of others. Being part of a community, relating to others and practising social responsibility can contribute to the creation of social capital and the fostering of social cohesion.

3.5 Vocational pedagogy and social interaction

The process of learning is portrayed as a collective activity which is achieved through the interaction with others and can generate social capital. Though this issue has been widely researched in academic education, the same does not apply to vocational education. Growing interest in the establishment of a vocational pedagogy, including the interaction between teachers and students, appears to be associated with the policy interest in raising the attractiveness and effectiveness of vocational education worldwide (see Lucas, 2014). The role of the vocational teacher has a prominent place in the discussion of vocational pedagogy. Teachers would assume a dual role, as holders of knowledge of the worlds of education and work (Gamble, 2013; Higham & Farnswoth, 2012; Lucas, Spencer, & Claxton, 2012); decisions made in teaching and the world of education would determine student progression into the world of work.

Pedagogical issues pertaining to teaching and learning practices have not been an integral element of the discourse of vocational education worldwide for a long time (Lucas, 2014; Lucas et al., 2012), leading to the assumption that "vocational learners are the losers as a result of this omission" (Lucas et al., 2012, p. 13). Though they may receive suitable preparation for the labour market, they would not be adequately prepared for other aspects of life. Though they may have access to equal opportunities in education and work through vocational education, they would fail to turn opportunities into outcomes. A widely referenced definition of pedagogy covers the following range of issues:

> Pedagogy, in our view, is the science, art, and craft of teaching. Pedagogy also fundamentally includes the decisions which are taken in the creation of the broader learning culture in which the teaching takes place, and the values which inform all interactions. (Lucas et al., 2012, p. 14)

In this definition, teaching is the focus of interest. It is inferred from the above that vocational teachers and their decisions made in teaching will play a contributing role in students' disposition to learning and understanding of the learning environment (as part of the broader learning culture). A positive disposition to understanding the learning environment and the actors involved is assumed to support vocational students to understand others (their values) outside that environment.

Gamble (2013) acknowledges that vocational pedagogy is widely perceived as the process of practising what is being taught and learnt (that is, *learning by doing*) to specify that such a perception fails to unveil the complexity of the notion. This complexity includes the complexity of the identity of the vocational teacher. If vocational teachers assume different roles in their interaction with their students, ranging from the role of the instructor to the role of the professional, students are assumed to respond accordingly, depending on the context of the interaction. Lucas et al. (2012) identify three overlapping types of vocational education in terms of the object of learning and the associated learning methods (pp. 35-36): physical materials, people and symbols. Physical materials are used in courses such as Plumbing and Hairdressing where students tend to learn (and prepare for their future occupation) through trial and error. Teachers on these courses may focus of the role of the professional with experience of the workplace. Students on courses such as Childcare and Hospitality learn to work with other people; the main learning method is simulation through role-play. Teachers may combine practices developed in the worlds of education and work. Symbols form part of learning on courses such as Accounting where students are encouraged to think critically. Teachers may develop a more traditional approach to interacting with their students.

It becomes evident that vocational teachers would assume a *dual professional identity* (Lucas et al., 2012, p. 25), of the traditional teacher who transmits knowledge and of the skilled worker who is qualified for a particular occupation. In other words, vocational teachers demonstrate "a combination of teacher in a classroom and instructor in a college-based workshop" (Gamble, 2013, p. 222). Therefore, they need to demonstrate mastery of their subject area, sound knowledge of pedagogical issues and practical experience of the workplace, in order to meet expectations for their roles. Teacher-student interaction appears to gain prominence in discussions around the need for vocational pedagogy. Interest lies "in the social dimension of learning, both between teacher and learner and between learners and their peers" (Lucas, 2014, p. 8). This interest is crystallised in the proposition that vocational teachers should be "respectful

of learners, prepared to show care for students' well-being and able to identify their needs" (p. 12). Though they prepare for employment and may be regarded future employees, vocational students remain learners with specific learning needs.

Higham and Farnsworth (2012) perceive personal experience of the workplace to be a useful tool for vocational teachers to facilitate student progression into the labour market: to "assist young people as they undertake a journey across the boundaries of education to work and adulthood" (p. 468). In their study on what makes a course vocational, they visualise the vocational course as a bridge between the worlds of education and work, two communities of practice defined by distinct goals, values, attitudes and behaviour. Vocational teachers who have experience of both worlds emerge as "mediators of the dialogue between the course and the community of practice which could then be realised in the enacted curriculum" (Higham & Farnsworth, 2012, p. 461). The role of the mediator would add value to the vocational course, build trust of both students and employers in the course, and contribute to an understanding of expectations (pp. 461-462). Therefore, vocational teachers can facilitate the creation of social capital shared among teachers, students and employers defined by trust and reciprocity (in the form of expectations).

Regardless of the extent of emphasis placed on each role, vocational teachers are expected to influence student motivation for learning. A significant factor affecting motivation is teacher-student proximity defined as "the degree to which a teacher cooperates with students" (Misbah, Gulikers, Maulana, & Mulder, 2015, p. 82). Where students perceive their teachers to be more understanding and tolerant, the degree of proximity is higher positively affecting the level of interest. Where teachers are considered to be strict and practice directive teaching, the degree of proximity is lower (Misbah et al., 2015, pp. 81-82). It is understood that in a learning environment which minimises spatial and social distance, the degree of cooperation between teachers and students is higher.

In contemporary society, vocational teachers would assume a dual role, being a traditional teacher and a skilled worker, thus developing teaching and learning practices in alignment with each role. Vocational students are assumed to respond accordingly to meet learning needs and expectations. In the case that teachers have personal experience of the workplace, they can facilitate the creation of social capital among students, employers and them, driven by trust and reciprocity. The economic crisis is assumed to hinder social capital development due to feelings of insecurity about the future and lack of trust in education and work.

3.6 Parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education

The concept of *parity of esteem* principally refers to the value of learning and qualifications in the labour market, and the educational benefits for students. It is mainly used to compare vocational education to academic education (Cedefop, 2014a; Lasonen & Gordon, 2008), thus acknowledging that vocational education widely assumes meaning and value against academic education. Given that the value in the labour market has a knock-on effect in society, I decided to include the discussion of parity of esteem in the chapter about social capital. The discussion revolves around policy attempts to promote equal access to opportunities in the labour market and society for all students, regardless of the learning pathway. Despite systematic (policy) attempts, there is ongoing scepticism about the feasibility of the concept, leading to the conclusion that parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications in the labour market and society does not exist (Oakes, 2005; Robinson, 1997; Simons, 2016).

In the EU policy discourse, the concept of *parity of esteem* signifies the need to raise the esteem of vocational education (Cedefop, 2014a; Lasonen & Gordon, 2008). The term *parity of esteem* is used along with the term *equal* in a policy attempt to bridge the gap between vocational education and academic education (Pring, 2007), and rewards from each learning pathway. These rewards include "social status, the salary, prestige and chances for further education and career development" (Lasonen & Gordon, 2008, p. 18). Traditionally, occupations associated with vocational education have enjoyed lower levels of rewards, such as lower status and fewer opportunities to progress into higher academic education. As such, in order to achieve parity of esteem, "links between VET and general education, in particular with higher education, need to be fostered" (Lasonen & Gordon, 2008, p. 8). Shavit and Müller (2000) propose the implementation of the same curriculum for all students at upper secondary level and the use of the phrase *equalization of life chances* to describe educational rewards. Given that young people prepare for occupations which respond to the division of labour, in differentiated learning environments and with the use of differentiated curriculum, the policy goal of equal access to life opportunities may not be feasible. In times of economic crisis, where preparation for employment is becoming more specialised, the goal of equal access may be more challenging.

Robinson (1997) examines parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education through an economic lens to reach the conclusion that it does not exist. Young people would choose academic education over the vocational pathway because they do not think that vocational qualifications are equally valued in the labour

market. The pursuit of a specific learning pathway to employment is projected as "a pragmatic decision based on where they would like to be in the labour market" (Robinson, 1997, p. 3). Such statements demonstrate awareness of the organisation and structure of the labour market. If individuals who hold academic qualifications tend to pursue more highly-paid occupations, regardless of the level of qualification, those with vocational qualifications are in a less well-paid position. Possible reasons for differentiation in rewards are encapsulated in the following statement: "The relationship of tracking, vocational education, and equality is certainly a complex one…part of a culture saturated with a hierarchical structure of political, economic, and social opportunity" (Oakes, 2005, p. 171). At the turn of the twenty-first century, a study conducted in England indicates that issues pertaining to parity of esteem have implications for vocational students and life choices (Atkins, Flint, & Oldfield, 2011). The delivery of parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education is currently advocated through social media networks. To give an example, Simons (2016) ascertains lack of parity of esteem: it is a long-standing issue which witnesses interested parties currently moving further away from that goal.

Shavit and Müller (2000) examine whether vocational education provides students with *a safety net* from falling into occupations which require no qualifications and are considered less desirable, or functions as *a diversion* from occupations which are more desirable and associated with higher education (pp. 437-438). Their examination reveals two opposing approaches to the outcome from vocational education. Those who have adopted a more pragmatic outlook on life and view vocational education as a safety net, advocate its value on the grounds that it can assist students who do not perform well academically in developing useful skills for the labour market. In other words, the value of vocational education lies in its compensatory role in education and work for those young people who may not achieve and progress through academic education. Those who have identified a contributing role to the grouping of students by ability (or tracking) and view vocational education as a diversion, assert that it preserves "the reproduction of social inequality across generations" (Shavit & Müller, 2000, p. 438). In other words, vocational students would prepare for predetermined positions in the labour market and society and hence limit their aspirations and opportunities in life. In times of economic crisis and unemployment, the question of whether vocational education serves as a safety net or a diversion may not be widely considered a priority. What emerges as a priority is economic security.

The question of whether there is parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education serves as acknowledgment that (upper secondary) vocational provision is not on a par with academic provision; the content and outcome of learning is not equally valued by young people, or the labour market, or society. The meaning and value of vocational education would be determined against academic education. In times of economic crisis, the associated question of whether vocational education serves as a safety net from falling into a lower position in the labour market and society (hence avoiding inequality) or a diversion from pursuing a higher position (hence perpetuating inequality) may have given prominence to concerns about economic security. Perpetuated concerns about the issue of parity of esteem would lead to the conclusion that it does not and could not exist (Oakes, 2005; Robinson, 1997; Simons, 2016). Such a conclusion would challenge the policy assumption that young people can enjoy equal opportunities in education and work, translated into equal outcomes. The question for social cohesion is whether vocational students can have access to all learning opportunities and rewards available in the education system; acquire a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in vocational education; feel respected and accepted in the labour market and society.

3.7 Concluding

Social capital refers to the participation of individuals or groups in social networks and the creation of social ties. Members of a network would benefit from sharing resources on the understanding that there is reciprocity in terms of trust and expectations. In the context of VET, social capital would be developed on the basis of human capital: individuals would bring their qualifications together to benefit from shared resources in social life and at work. The vocational school (or vocational course) can be viewed as a social unit which requires the implementation of vocational pedagogy and encourages social interaction. Roles developed in the vocational classroom (or workshop) would be more complicated than the respective in academic education, and lead to the assumption that social capital development through vocational education would be a more complicated process.

Chapter 4
Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look into the methodology of my study. I will discuss how I have selected, collected and organised my research data, in order to address the purpose and the research questions. The chapter will be divided into four parts. I will present the research questions and hence the direction given to the study. Next, I will introduce the two sub-studies I conducted in accordance with the strategy of inquiry discussed in Chapter 1. For convenience I have titled these studies *policy document study* and *interview study*. I will then touch upon issues which determine the quality of research.

4.2 Framing the research questions

I have formulated two research questions to explore how vocational education in Greece and England is envisaged to contribute to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. These questions were finalised when I completed my pilot study, which will be presented further below. They indicated the need to conduct mixed methods research, similarly discussed further below.

4.2.1 The research questions

The overarching question of my study concerns how vocational education can contribute to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. In the EU policy context, the development of vocational education as part of VET is associated with the promotion of social cohesion through employment and economic growth, anticipated to secure inclusion in the labour market and society (see Chapter 1). With the EU policy context being the source of my inspiration, the research interest is confined to the economic and the social role of education, understood to represent two main aspects of life: work and social life.

I have created two datasets, in order to gain some insight into a variety of perceptions of vocational education in Greece and England. The first set includes state policy documents which discuss vocational education and are produced by the ministries of education. The second set covers data collected through interviews with vocational teachers in Greece and England.

To better understand the direction of vocational education in times of economic crisis, I have translated the overarching question into two specific research questions. Each question encompasses three sub-questions. The first two address a variety of perceptions organised into those communicated through policy documents and those held by vocational teachers in Greece and England. The third one encompasses the comparability perspective to address similarities and differences between Greece and England, as identified in the variety of perceptions analysed and discussed in the study. My research questions are the following:

Research question 1: About the labour market

How is vocational education envisaged to support its students to find their place in the labour market in Greece and England?

   a) What perceptions are communicated through state education policy documents?
   b) What perceptions are held by vocational teachers?
   c) What are the main similarities and differences between Greece and England?

Research question 2: About society

How is vocational education envisaged to support its students to find their place in society in Greece and England?

   a) What perceptions are communicated through state education policy documents?
   b) What perceptions are held by vocational teachers?
   c) What are the main similarities and differences between Greece and England?

I decided to set two broad research questions, in order to allow for participant teachers and selected policy documents to reveal aspects of the topic of research which I may not have been aware of, and which could contribute to the enrichment of knowledge about the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

4.2.2 Piloting the research study

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), piloting is a useful tool for putting a research design into trial and conducting the main study with vigour. It assists in deciding whether the research design could be effective and hence address any concerns within the wider academic community in terms of the main study. It could be a useful

tool for professional development as well because it enables the researcher to explore strengths and weaknesses of their research practice.

In light of the argument about piloting, I divided my pilot study into two parts. The first part involved interviews with eight vocational teachers in total, three male teachers and one female teacher in each country. Participant teachers had experience of teaching in initial VET, at secondary and post-secondary level, and possessed a varying range of formal qualifications and professional experience. Rich data were collected with the use of the interview guide I specifically designed for my pilot study. I applied thematic analysis to the interview data, which led to the following six themes: (a) supporting preparation for adult life; (b) supporting labour market integration; (c) supporting local-national development; (d) developing personal growth; (e) developing school-community relationships; (f) developing society at large. The pilot themes served as a guide for the second part of my pilot study, the analysis of two state education policy documents produced in Greece.

The report on the pilot study turned into a tool for reflection on my research practice. With regards to the pilot interview study, I realised that I had taken for granted that participant teachers and I have a common understanding of the meaning of vocational education. It soon became clear that different perceptions reveal different theoretical approaches to the same concept. This indicated the need to frame my main interview study with the definition of vocational education, as provided by each participant. It became evident that questions which may work well in one cultural context may not encourage further discussion in another. To give an example, issues associated with the economy triggered the interest of teachers mainly in Greece. This assisted me in refining the interview guide to allow for more flexibility, and to solidify the overarching question of my study. Initially, I had reservations about interviewing. I soon managed to challenge my own thinking and enjoy the process of learning from and with others.

During the main interview process, I decided to apply critical discourse analysis (CDA) to the policy documents instead of thematic analysis. It became clear that this approach could facilitate the process of delineating criteria for document selection. I found one of the two policy documents in the pilot study insightful: it provided some insight into how vocational students are envisaged to enter both the labour market and society in times of economic crisis. The fact that I had applied thematic analysis supported the decision to keep that policy document in the main dataset. The integration

of CDA and thematic analysis will be discussed next, starting with the meaning of conducting mixed methods research.

4.2.3 Conducting mixed methods research

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) address the question of what constitutes mixed methods research through the analysis of definitions provided by selected experts in their field. They identify five issues for consideration: the nature, the stage and the breadth of mixing, as well as reasons for and orientation of mixing. I will touch upon them in light of the literature consulted.

The nature of mixing refers to whether methods are mixed across quantitative and qualitative research practices or within the same type of practice. Johnson et al. (2007) underline that for the majority of their respondents the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods defines mixed methods research. Attention is drawn to prioritising methods. Creswell (2009) highlights the importance of deciding whether priority will lie in a specific type of method or some balance will be promoted. Morse (2003) proposes that the main method should be distinguished from the supplemental used to enrich data collection. Two trends in mixed methods research can be identified (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ritchie, 2003): combining qualitative and quantitative methods, and combining methods within the same type of practice. Ritchie (2003) asserts that "the same principles apply to using more than one qualitative method to carry out an investigation since each brings a particular kind of insight to a study" (p. 37).

Methods could be mixed at a specific stage, or during data analysis, or both (Creswell, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007). The stage may be determined by whether data collection "will be in phases (sequentially) or gathered at the same time (concurrently)" (Creswell, 2009, p. 206; brackets in original). Breadth of mixing could range from data collection to methodological perspectives and the language used to discuss research (Johnson et al., 2007).

Reasons for mixing methods emanate from the theoretical and philosophical position of researchers and could include the following: data triangulation to strengthen reliability and validity; a better understanding of the social phenomenon under study; developing an understanding of the whole picture; bringing issues related to social justice into focus (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Johnson et al., 2007). They are associated with orientation of mixing and the question of whether mixing is dictated by the research questions or the underlying content of research (Johnson et al., 2007).

As indicated in Chapter 1, I have combined two qualitative research methods to reach a deeper understanding of the envisaged relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis: documentary analysis and qualitative interviewing. Each approach serves a distinct aim which dictates a distinct technique for data analysis. This has led to the development of two studies: the policy document study and the interview study. I followed the simultaneous strategy, which means that the two datasets were created concurrently. Mixing had a reciprocal impact on both approaches to data collection. I first started creating a corpus of policy documents to identify those which could assist me most in addressing my research questions as well as topics which could be included in the interview guide. I finalised document selection during the interview process on the basis of emerging themes. I decided to prioritise qualitative interviewing and use documentary analysis as the supplemental approach when I realised that my interview data could address issues not discussed in the selected policy documents.

4.3 Policy document study

The policy document study will explore the discourse of vocational education in selected state education policy documents produced in Greece and England over the period of 2003-2013. I will focus on a critical understanding of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis, explicitly or implicitly communicated through the selected policy documents. CDA is the approach to analysis, with critical policy analysis being the field of analysis;[21] the latter will be briefly discussed next.

4.3.1 Critical policy analysis

To understand critical policy analysis, I will briefly examine the definition of policy provided by Ball (1993). I will touch upon issues raised by practitioners in this field, as incorporated into my data analysis and discussion. Commonalities found between critical policy analysis and CDA will be presented in a complementary way.

---

[21] Broadly speaking, education policy analysts and discourse analysts using a critical lens in research work within the critical theory framework, and to a varying extent under the influence of Foucault (Fairclough, 2003; Taylor, 1997; Wodak, 2001). Given that the essence of power does not constitute a research interest herein, I will not be making references to Foucault's work.

4.3.1.1 Understanding critical policy analysis

Critical analysts of education policy (i.e., Ball, 1993; Prunty, 1985; Taylor, 1997; Troyna, 1994) share a common research objective: to unveil any injustice in education and schooling and bring equality into focus. They take policy apart to explore how knowledge and power could determine the positioning of and relationship between individuals and social groups in education and schooling. The departure point is the definition of policy.

Ball (1993) conceptualises policy in two different ways, as *text* and as *discourse*. Policy text refers to *what* is communicated through the physical text; what is "thought, talked and written about" (Ball, 1993, p. 10) in certain social settings. Quoting Codd (p. 11), Ball points out that there is a plurality of readings initiating, in turn, a plurality of interpretations. Policy discourse indicates *how* policy is communicated; how both language and power are used in a certain setting. Discourse is influenced by the choice of words and phrases used to construct utterances which, in turn, reveal the outcome of negotiation between interested parties: those who introduce a certain policy and those expected to respond to it.

Ozga (2000) illuminates the dialectical relation between policy text and policy discourse when she asserts that policy texts "tell a story about what is possible or desirable to achieve through education policy" (p. 95). These could then be read and understood as any story. Prunty (1985) discerns an ideal in policy formulation when he states that it is "made to help bring about a social ideal, usually by attending to a real or potential barrier to social progress" (p. 136).

This study will explore what is possible or desirable to achieve through vocational education in the direction of social cohesion in times of economic crisis. I have purposefully avoided including many tables in the main body of the thesis, in order to narrate the story of vocational education and maintain flow.

4.3.1.2 Issues taken into consideration

Issues of interest herein cover the notions of *time* and *space* in policy analysis, the context of analysis, and the use of interdisciplinarity. Time refers to possible changes of policies in the course of time, including the problem they aim to attend to (Ball, 1993). Space involves the perception of policies as the site of interaction between the local and the national on the one hand, and the national and the global on the other, with globalisation possibly influencing national policy formulation (Ball, 1997). Contextualising policies to understand how they have been shaped is considered an

important step in policy analysis. Taylor (1997) implicitly claims that the focus of interest could be a specific context when she refers to the frame of two of her research projects.

This study will look into whether the policy problem related to vocational education has changed over the period of time under study. Given that the EU is the wider context, I will address the national-European relation in the field of vocational education through explicit or implicit references to the Copenhagen Process. I have framed data analysis by the cultural (and language) and the economic (and historical) context. The comparability perspective gives prominence to the cultural context. The significance of the economic context emanates from the economic crisis and the associated purpose of my study.

There is a call for an interdisciplinary approach to policy analysis, including theories and concepts (Ball, 1993; Troyna, 1994). As will be discussed below, CDA is projected as a suitable approach which enables researchers to "go beyond speculation and demonstrate how policy texts work" (Taylor, 2004, p. 436).

4.3.2 Critical discourse analysis

The discussion will revolve around characteristics shared by the various approaches developed within the CDA framework; in particular, the departure point, the main approach to and principles of CDA, and the key concepts of *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. Concerns about CDA will be addressed as well.

4.3.2.1 Understanding critical discourse analysis

CDA draws upon a wide and diverse range of theories and concepts, methods and techniques (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Theoretical and methodological choices are made in alignment with the object and field of research (Wodak & Krzyżanowski, 2008). The departure point is a social problem or issue which has a linguistic and a symbolic aspect. The unit of analysis is the text, ranging from the written to the visual.

According to Meyer (2001), the main approach to CDA encompasses the hermeneutic and the linguistic character of analysis. Even though this is not made perfectly clear by its various practitioners, the hermeneutic-interpretative analysis is common to the various approaches. The linguistic character of analysis dictates the "specific incorporation of linguistic categories" (Meyer, p. 2001, 16), mainly in conjunction with the research questions. The social character of analysis is not ignored

but depends on "linguistic concepts such as actors, mode, time, tense, argumentation, and so on" (p. 25).

Fairclough (1992) presents in logical sequence five theoretical propositions as principles of CDA. He argues that there is a dialectical relation between discourse and society, with discourse shaping and being shaped by society. Discourse shapes society by constructing and changing three of its dimensions: objects of knowledge, social relationships and social identity. Discourse is shaped by society through power relationships between users of language. This leads to the proposition that discourse reflects the outcome of power struggles. Language emerges as a powerful tool for social control, typically exercised by a dominant social group. What is considered a natural process could then be contested. Within the CDA framework, researchers are expected to take a stance and raise awareness of the social problem or issue they are researching.

Central to CDA are the concepts of *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. Intertextuality indicates that the researcher aims to explore how a single text is related to other texts possibly constructed before or after its production. Wodak (2008) points out that "this is the only way it achieves meaning" (p. 9). Intertextuality could be manifested explicitly, in quotations, or implicitly, in assumptions. Similarly, interdiscursivity suggests that every discourse is related to other discourses and in different ways. Drawing upon Wodak's (2008) example about the relation between un/employment and gender or racism, the discourse of vocational education is related to the discourse of employment, where preparation for a particular occupation or industry is discussed.

4.3.2.2 Issues taken into consideration

CDA has been met with criticism mainly about the nature of qualitative research and the question of whether analysis could be objective and impartial. The concept of *criticality* is another major concern. Given that both are addressed in the work of CDA practitioners (i.e., Fairclough, 2003; Matheson, 2008; Meyer, 2001), I decided to focus on their argumentation.

To begin with, CDA practitioners have been accused of carrying their own political agenda into research and selecting texts for analysis which could serve that agenda (Widdowson, as cited in Matheson, 2008, para. 10; Meyer, 2001). This accusation is not rebutted. Rather, it is ascertained that CDA does not aim for objectivity and impartiality. Researchers are committed to pursuing social responsibility by unveiling power issues in the discourse of dominant social groups and advocating for

the oppressed (Fairclough, Mulderring, & Wodak, 2011; Meyer, 2001). It is emphasised, however, that "standards of careful, rigorous and systematic analysis apply with equal force to CDA as to other approaches" (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 358). Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is projected as a standard (Fairclough, 2003). Matheson (2008) links CDA to qualitative research to affirm that researchers who do not take a positivist stance on research are "clearly part of the analysis" (para. 10).

Concern about the meaning of criticality pertains to the perceived tendency of CDA practitioners to analyse discourse related to other cultures in terms of values underpinning their own culture (Chilton, as cited in Fairclough et al., 2011). This may embed concern about whether different value systems are respected. It could then be argued that a different perspective does not necessarily exclude respect; it fundamentally includes understanding of culture-specific issues. Understanding would thus become intertwined with criticality. Matheson (2008) discerns a dialectical relation between criticality and understanding when he underlines that these are "not distinct modes of analysis but moments of interpretation which imply the other" (para. 28).

Billet (2011) touches upon power issues in the discourse of vocational education when he argues that "it is the voices of powerful 'others' rather than those who practise an occupation that have long been used to characterise, make judgments about and attempt to reshape the provision of vocational education" (p. 16; quotation marks in original). The powerful others would be the policy-makers who get their voice heard through policy documents. This is the dominant voice which frames and organises potential action from interested parties. The less dominant voice belongs to vocational teachers whose action is framed by policies. With regards to the relation between vocational education and academic education, where these two learning pathways are portrayed as pillars of formal education, then academic education is ascribed the dominant voice. The less dominant voice belongs to vocational education which defines its meaning and value against academic education: non-academic; lower ability; lower status; second chance.

This study could contribute to the strengthening of the voice of vocational education by raising further awareness of its direction, possible or desirable, and interpreting perceptions communicated through the selected policy documents produced in Greece and England. It is critical in the sense that it intends to encourage reflection on a certain aspect of educational reality and hence reach an understanding of a certain aspect of social life. I intend to practise social responsibility by analysing my data with

respect for the various perceptions emerging from the selected and culture-specific policy documents.

4.3.3 Developing a framework for documentary analysis

There can be no simple, ready-made protocol for analysing discourse as this is dictated by the purpose of research (Reisigl, 2008; van Dijk, 2001). Furthermore, a full account of analysis is considered a time-intensive and improbable activity; instead, it is advisable to identify linguistic features of text closely linked to social features (Meyer, 2001; van Dijk, 2001).

The framework I have developed takes into consideration the linguistic and the social character of CDA. It is based on the frameworks introduced by Reisigl (2008; focussing on political discourse analysis) and Fairclough (2003; focussing on textual analysis). The direction of vocational education is at the heart of analysis. Analysis of the discourse of vocational education is assumed to unveil aspects of the envisaged direction, and the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. I will explore the policy interest in youth preparation for employment (and the direction towards human capital development) and preparation for coexistence with others through social ties (and the direction towards social capital development). The unit of analysis is the written text. Images and graphs included in the selected texts have been omitted from the analysis. Each selected policy document represents a case.

I followed three steps in my analysis. Given that the departure point of analysis has to be a social problem rather than the research question(s) (Fairclough, 2003), I firstly identified a social (policy) problem. Based on the selected policy documents, low participation among upper secondary students in vocational education is the perceived policy problem, potentially a barrier to social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

I then considered the linguistic and the social construction of key social actors in text. Linguistic construction refers to whether actors are included in or excluded from text, or represented in a specific or a generic way (Fairclough, 2003). Social construction indicates how their social identity is shaped, including "positive and negative traits, qualities and features" (Reisigl, 2008, p. 99). Vocational students are the key actors in the selected policy documents: the intended outcomes from vocational education affect them most. In policy documents produced in Greece, they are mainly represented as *students*, in a semi-generic way; in those produced in England, they are mainly discussed as *young people*, in a generic way. In both cases, they have rights and

responsibilities; needs and motives; talents and inclinations possibly not supported by (and thus excluded from) academic education.

I finally identified the key issues raised in the selected policy documents, that is, assumptions and arguments about vocational education and vocational students, relevant to my research questions. Assumptions are considered crucial to understanding discourse because utterances are made in terms of knowledge taken for granted and not explicitly shared (Fairclough, 2003). This involves knowledge shared by members of the same society or culture. When discussing types of knowledge, van Dijk (2001) argues that culturally shared knowledge "forms the basis or common ground of all social practices and discourses" and "may therefore be presupposed in public discourse" (p. 114).

To identify assumptions and arguments, I examined features of vocabulary embedded in the discourse of the knowledge-based economy and society in Europe (see Chapter 1). The paragraph was the site of application. Four common themes have emerged from the selected policy documents. The feature of vocabulary will be presented first followed by the associated theme in italics. The learning content and objectives of upper secondary education remain divided into academic and vocational, indicating that policy-makers aim at *maintaining the vocational tradition* alongside the academic one. Vocational education is projected as an alternative opportunity for young people to get educated and qualified. It is perceived as *a second chance* in education and work. Both countries under study aim at strengthening labour market relevance, and delivering knowledge and skills which match its actual needs. Vocational education is portrayed as *a means of securing employment*. Vocational education is widely assumed to be a second choice or second-class education. This dictates the need to discuss *the notion of parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education*.

The aforementioned steps have been translated into respective research objectives, as presented in the form of a question:

a) What is the rationale for the proposed reforms to vocational education in Greece and England?

b) How are vocational students linguistically and socially constructed in text?

c) What are the main assumptions and arguments about vocational education?

These questions will be addressed in Chapter 5.

4.3.4 Determining the sampling frame

I will discuss the set criteria for selecting and collecting the six (sets of) state education policy documents included in the dataset (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Selected education policy documents

The case of Greece		
Title	**Ministry**	**Year of publication**
Organization and Operation of Secondary Vocational Education and other provisions	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	2006
a) Technological Lyceum: The Proposal for Technical Vocational Education	Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs	2011
b) Technological Lyceum and other provisions		2012
Restructuring of Secondary Education and other provisions	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs	2013
The case of England		
Title	**Department**	**Year of publication**
14-19 Education and Skills	Department for Education and Skills	2005
Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training post-16		2007
a) Green paper	Department for Education and Skills	
b) Policy paper	Department for Children, Schools and Families	
Wolf Review of Vocational Education – Government Response	Department for Education	2011

4.3.4.1 Criteria for selecting and collecting documents

I adapted my criteria from those introduced by Reisigl (2008), combined with those used in systematic literature review (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), in order to enhance

clarity and create a manageable corpus of documents within the time and space constraints of a PhD research study. The criteria are as follows: specific time frame; specific site of policy action; specific discourse; specific genres; specific location; exclusion criteria; triangulation.

The Copenhagen Process is the point of reference for the **time frame**. The dataset includes policy documents related to the Copenhagen Process through the topic of vocational education. The starting point is January 2003, following its launch in November 2002. Its last revision would be in December 2010. The end point is December 2013, a year prior to the due date for the realisation of its short-term objectives. I consider the period of 2003-2013 sufficient to explore how the direction of vocational education is developed with regards to social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

The **site of policy action** is constituted by policy documents which fall within the nationwide scope of state initiatives in Greece and England. There appears to be a difference in policy focus. Education policy in Greece is process-oriented, where process denotes a particular learning pathway.[22] The site of action is defined by policy initiatives aiming to reform vocational education. In contrast, education policy in England is outcome-oriented, with skills being central to education policy.[23] The VET system in England, including vocational education policy-making, is "not only complex but also volatile" (Hoeckel, Cully, Field, Halász, & Kis, 2009, p. 20). I found it challenging to identify key documents on vocational education published prior to the Wolf Report (DfE, 2011). Policy documents tend to discuss academic and vocational education together (i.e., the 2005 White Paper, *14-19 Education and Skills*) or skills development for both young people and adults (i.e., the 2013 policy paper, *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*). I addressed this challenge by focussing on policy documents produced by the Department for Education and by applying the exclusion criteria presented below. Therefore, the site of action is framed by policy documents on further education and skills development, published by the Department for Education.

The **discourse** of vocational education is at the heart of the study. Given that discourses "cross between fields, overlap, refer to each other" (Wodak, 2008, p. 17), the discourse of vocational education would entail other discourses (i.e., employment), in a

---

[22] An example is Law 3475/2006: *Organization and Operation of Secondary Vocational Education and other provisions* (official translation), where the focus is on the learning pathway of vocational education.
[23] An example is the 2006 White Paper, *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*. It is understood that students engaged in further (academic or vocational) education will develop skills which could help them to improve their life.

sense, and be part of larger discourses (i.e., VET or formal education). I have selected policy documents for the dataset and textual fragments for analysis by matching documents against the research questions. Where vocational education was part of a larger discourse, exclusion criteria were applied.

Selected policy documents represent specific **genres** which form a genre chain and serve a common purpose:[24] to persuade targeted readers to support the proposed initiatives and thus gain consensus. In the case of Greece, the chain is formed by three genres: the explanatory report, the bill and the policy proposal (as a response to public consultation); the first two will be treated as a report. When a new law is introduced, an explanatory report and the associated bill are produced by the government concerned, and submitted to the Parliament. Explanatory reports are normally discursive and aim to persuade the Parliament into passing the submitted bill (Hellenic Parliament, 2016). The response to public consultation communicates values and interests to the public and sets grounds for a policy proposal. In the case of England, the chain conventionally comprises the following: the green paper, the white paper and the government response (as a policy paper). When a new policy initiative is proposed, a Green Paper is produced by the government to initiate discussion with members of the Parliament and wider public. Feedback is then offered to the associated Department. A White Paper is produced to delineate a future policy initiative, which often serves as the basis for a bill to be submitted to the Parliament (UK Parliament, 2016). A government response is usually a document setting out action in response to a commissioned report or an issue of concern.

The **location** of selected policy documents is framed by databases developed by state institutions. In the case of Greece, it is the Hellenic Parliament and the Ministry of Education; in the case of England, it is the Department for Education and the GOV.UK service.

Given that vocational education is part of the larger discourse of VET, I used **exclusion criteria** to delineate the limits (and possibly limitations) of my study. The study does not concern a particular vocational area or specialty, or specialised education such as maritime education, or vocational training such as apprenticeships. It does not discuss vocational courses within the special education framework, or pre-vocational education and learning, or higher vocational education. It does not touch upon issues relevant to recruitment and professional development of vocational teachers, or

---

[24] A genre chain is defined as a combination of "genres which are regularly linked together, involving systematic transformations from genre to genre" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 31).

governance and funding of vocational education, or international conventions in the field of VET.

Triangulation was developed as a three-step process. I constructed the genre chain described above. To acquire background information, I studied national reports on (vocational) education produced in both countries under study and discussed in Chapter 1. To consolidate assumptions and arguments identified in the selected policy documents, I cross-checked them with those emerging from the interview texts.

To validate the policy document selection and collection, I set seven criteria, which illuminated comparability between Greece and England as well. These cover the following: period of 2003-2013; process-oriented policy action in Greece and outcome-oriented in England; discourse of vocational education; genre chain formation; state databases as location; exclusion criteria; triangulation.

4.4 Interview study

The interview study will explore participant teachers' perceptions of vocational education. Emphasis will be placed on indications for the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis, rather than generalisation of findings.[25] I will discuss how I constructed the sampling frame and accessed participant teachers in Greece and England. I will then present the method I used to produce data (semi-structured interviewing) and the technique to manage data (thematic analysis).

4.4.1 Determining the sampling frame

Two levels of sampling are discerned in qualitative research: *sampling of context* (or the location for research) and *sampling of participants* (Bryman, 2012, pp. 417-418). Most of the sampling techniques are considered purposive, indicating that the researcher would select a number of cases for data collection and analysis with a purpose in mind (Bryman, 2012). Determining the number of cases emerges as an issue of ongoing consideration (Baker & Edwards, 2012). In this study, I have used a number of purposive sampling techniques to sample participant teachers and location for interviewing. These will be presented in conjunction with factors influencing the number of interviews I conducted.

---

[25] One may suggest that findings can be generalised in the location of the interviews. This study follows a more traditional approach to qualitative research. For more information about generalisation, see Lewis & Ritchie, 2003.

4.4.1.1 Defining the location

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the specific location in Greece is framed by two regional units. These belong to two different administrative regions: the units of Thessaloniki in Central Macedonia, Northern Greece and Trikala in Thessaly, Central Greece (see Appendix C). The unit of Thessaloniki emerges as the largest in Greece, populated with 1,110,312 inhabitants (ELSTAT, 2012).[26] The city of Thessaloniki is the second largest economic and industrial centre of the country. Yet in 2010, the once flourishing industrial zone situated in the western part would turn into a desert zone. Since then, there has been a systematic attempt to establish a high-technology business park in the eastern part (Technopolis, 2016). In terms of education administration, there are two local directorates of secondary education: Thessaloniki East and Thessaloniki West.

The unit of Trikala is considered medium-size in Greece, populated with 131,085 inhabitants (ELSTAT, 2012). With Thessaly remaining a vital agricultural area through the years, the key sector of the local economy is agriculture. In terms of education administration, there is one local directorate of secondary education.

The specific location in England is defined by the geographic counties of East, North, South and West Yorkshire (see Appendix D); this is considered broad enough to encompass a variety of economic sectors. East Yorkshire is situated in northeastern England and South Yorkshire in north-central England, with the counties of North and West Yorkshire located in the northern part of the country. The geographic county of East Yorkshire, also known as East Riding, comprises the homonymous unitary authority and is populated with 590,585 inhabitants. It is considered mainly rural and agricultural (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014a). The geographic county of North Yorkshire, which encompasses the homonymous administrative county and has a population of 1,070,016, is regarded prosperous. The key sector of the local economy is agriculture, with high-technology businesses being currently set up (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014b).

South Yorkshire has a population of 1,343,601 and is mainly urban. The once flourishing mining and heavy industry activities have made way for light manufacturing activities (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014c). West Yorkshire, populated with 2,226,058 inhabitants, is mainly urban as well. The largest city in the region is Leeds, one of the largest economic and commercial centres in England (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014d).

---

[26] The former prefecture of Athens, and most densely populated area in Greece, is currently divided into four regional units.

Based on the above, I will argue that the selected regional units in Greece are comparable to the selected counties in England. Comparability is determined mainly by economic activities. The local economy in the counties of North and East Yorkshire is mainly based on agricultural activities; the same applies to the unit of Trikala. The industrial sector used to be vital to the economy of the counties of South and West Yorkshire; the same applies to the unit of Thessaloniki. These areas appear to be in the process of redefining their economic identity to strengthen the local economy. This could facilitate understanding of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

4.4.1.2 Using purposive sampling techniques

Purposive sampling is defined as a "sample of selected cases that will best enable the researcher to explore the research questions in depth" (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 154). In this study, the *purpose* of gaining some insight into vocational teachers' perceptions of vocational education and its relation to social cohesion in times of economic underpins the sampling frame. To ensure that participant teachers would be purposefully selected, I decided to match the sampling frame against its *relevance* to the research questions and the *diversity* of perceptions requested (terms used in Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, p. 79). Relevance to the question requesting perceptions held by vocational teachers in Greece and England was established by selecting teachers delivering vocational courses at upper secondary level in each country. Diversity of perceptions was achieved by selecting both female and male teachers delivering courses in diverse vocational subject areas and diverse settings.

I have employed a combination of purposive sampling techniques: homogenous sampling and stratified purposive sampling in combination with chain sampling (or snowballing). **Homogenous sampling** indicates that the group of research participants shares a common characteristic. This calls for a relatively small sample size to allow for an in-depth exploration of the research theme (Ritchie et al., 2003a). I will argue that the group of participant teachers is *fairly homogeneous* on the understanding that participants were sharing a common professional experience during the interview period: they were delivering vocational courses at upper secondary level.

Stratified purposive sampling involves the division of the group of research participants into subgroups on the basis of particular characteristics. In this study, the group of participant teachers is divided into two subgroups: teachers working in Greece and teachers working in England. Each subgroup is stratified by gender, vocational

subject area and setting. To facilitate analysis and discussion of findings, vocational subject areas have been clustered around a binary pair. The pair is human care and machinery-based courses. The attributive *human care* defines courses which require direct human interaction (i.e., Finance and Administration) and hence would prepare students to assume *customer-facing roles* (Hippach-Schneider et al., 2013, p. 11). The attributive *machinery-based* refers to courses which demand interaction through the use of some type of equipment (i.e., Engineering). Part of these courses may or may not have been replaced by academic learning. The setting refers to the location of the vocational school or college where participant teachers were teaching: the local directorate of secondary education in Greece or the county in England.

Snowballing dictates that the researcher follows a chain of contacts to identify and access possible participants who meet set criteria and hence could contribute to exploring the research theme in depth. The chain of contacts could include those who have already participated in the research process (Ritchie et al., 2003a). While organising and conducting the interview study, I decided to make contact with specific members of my formal and informal social networks in Greece and England. The purpose was to request assistance in approaching both female and male teachers delivering courses in specific vocational subject areas and specific settings.

Participant teachers in the interview study share the experience of teaching vocational courses at upper secondary level (fairly homogeneous group). They are stratified by gender, nature of course (human care or machinery-based), and setting (directorate in Greece and county in England).

4.4.1.3 Defining the sample size

I conducted 31 interviews in total and decided to include 28 in the dataset, equally distributed between the cases of Greece and England. I will argue that the number I achieved was adequate to produce rich data. To support my argument, I will mainly draw upon the Review paper directly addressing the question of how many qualitative interviews is enough (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Selected experts from diverse academic backgrounds share their expertise on interview research with the Review paper editors. It emerges that there can be no single objective response as the number of interviews tends to be determined by factors underpinning individual choice. Bryman (2012) reiterates the notion that the sample size should be based on rigorous justification; I will provide that next.

To begin with, I conducted pilot interviews with accessible participants, a process which contributed to the collection of rich data and indicated that accessibility of participants may be crucial to interviewing. Given that not all targeted participants were accessible during the main interview period, I decided to set a *minimum* and a *maximum* number of interviews (terms used in Matthews & Ross, 2010, pp. 163, 169): 24 and 30 respectively. This decision was consolidated by the following factors: (pursuing my) research interest; (reaching) data saturation; (conducting) a cross-cultural case study; taking resource limitations into account.

The **research interest** in qualitative interviewing fundamentally lies in the range of elicited responses and not frequency. A relatively small sample size may be adequate to address the research questions (and sub-questions) and reach in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon under study. In this study, I am interested to achieve in-depth understanding of how vocational teachers in selected areas in Greece and England perceive the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. In this light, I decided to set the maximum total number to 30.

Data saturation refers to the point where the researcher is likely to stop collecting data and hence conduct no more interviews, because no new themes or issues of interest seem to emerge. When exploring aspects of a social phenomenon, it is not plausible to exhaust all possible issues pertaining to that phenomenon. The reason is that "we can never know everything" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 220). In this light, instead of theoretical saturation, the use of the term *theoretical sufficiency* is proposed (Dey, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 220). This refers to the collection of data sufficient to answer the research questions, serve the purpose of research and contribute to the field of research. According to Richards (2009), data saturation implies sufficiency, which is achieved "by good data handling" (p. 144). It is then crucial to identify ideas and themes to illuminate the phenomenon under study and contribute to a better understanding. Regardless of richness of my data, I was concerned about two facts in Greece: I had interviewed mainly male teachers and teachers teaching courses such as IT. Though the gender ratio remained the same, I knew that I had reached saturation when I interviewed the Auto Mechanics teacher, delivering a traditional vocational (and more technically-based) course. In England, I was initially concerned about the small number of male participants. It was during the second stage of interviewing that I knew that I had reached saturation: I started interviewing more male teachers delivering the more technically-based courses, courses which may require mastery of a technique.

This is a **cross-cultural case study** whose context is framed by the countries of Greece and England. Following the example of Shah (as presented in Baker & Edwards, 2012, p. 41), I decided to conduct and include an equal number of interviews in each country to ensure comparability. The interview study began and was completed in England to meet the number of interviews already conducted in between in Greece. This will be discussed in more detail further below.

Resource limitations refer to factors such as time, possibly imposing limitations on research decisions. The type of the interview study I conducted demanded fieldwork and travelling to the workplace of participant teachers in Greece and England. It is a resource-intensive activity which influenced the sample size to a certain extent. This paves the way for discussing how I accessed vocational teachers willing to help me with my study.

4.4.2 Accessing participant teachers

I will discuss how I obtained access to participant teachers and organised interview meetings in Greece and England. Furthermore, I will briefly present the profile of interviewees.

4.4.2.1 Obtaining access to participant teachers

I followed two different approaches to access participant teachers in Greece and England. In Greece, I followed the approach stipulated by the Ministry of Education. Once granted formal permission to conduct my interview study, I organised face-to-face meetings with vocational school head teachers to discuss my study. In England, I contacted college principals directly, by post or via email.

To conduct research within the school education system in Greece, the researcher is required to formally request permission from the Ministry of Education. To ensure that my interview study would be set in a location wide enough to encompass a variety of economic activities, I requested and was granted permission to access vocational schools operating within the administrative regions of Central Macedonia and Thessaly. The formal document was communicated to both me and the local directorates of secondary education the selected schools belong to; this facilitated access to participant teachers.[27]

---

[27] Given that this is an official document circulated only to specific local directorates and, in turn, to specific vocational schools, I decided to avoid including it in the appendix part of the thesis. Instead, I will include the reference number of the document: 70520/C2, and the date of issue: 23/05/2013. The guidelines document available online provides an overall summary of the procedure followed to conduct

To identify vocational schools offering courses in a variety of the vocational areas operating during the interview period, I consulted the websites run by the selected schools. Generally, following meetings with the vocational school head teachers, I obtained access to vocational teachers in eight schools in total: four belong to the local directorate of secondary education of Thessaloniki East, three to the local directorate of Thessaloniki West and one to the local directorate of Trikala. Some interviews were scheduled for a different day and some were conducted on the day of the initial meeting. Interviews were conducted over the period of (end of) March to (beginning of) May 2014, excluding the Easter school break and prior to the end of the school year.

In England, I requested permission to access participant teachers from college principals in a formal way. I sent out a formal letter to the selected colleges by e/mail requesting help with my interview study (see Appendix E). The letter introduced the topic of research and the purpose of the interview study; it posed a request for help from teachers delivering vocational courses in specific Departments or subject areas; it delineated the interview process. In comparison with Greece, I similarly consulted the websites run by the selected colleges to identify the vocational areas they specialise in. Interview meetings with participant teachers were held in seven colleges in total: two in East Yorkshire, two in North Yorkshire, two in South Yorkshire, and one in West Yorkshire. Nine interviews in total were conducted over the period of November to December 2013, prior to the Christmas college break. To reach the number of interviews held in Greece, I carried out five more interviews during November 2014.

I approached vocational school head teachers and college principals as **gatekeepers**: the senior members of teaching or administration staff who could grant access through "a constant process of negotiation and renegotiation of what is and is not permissible" (Bryman, 2012, p. 151). The process and outcome of negotiation could determine "the success of a study" (Lewis, 2003, p. 62). This implies that the way power is distributed and trust achieved in specific settings could influence the course of a study. According to Bryman (2012), obtaining access to research participants does not guarantee that researchers achieve "a smooth passage in their subsequent dealings with the people they study" (p. 151). This became evident in a couple of cases in Greece where participant teachers expressed concerns about the purpose of research. Their concerns may have embodied scepticism about the 2013 discontinuation of vocational specialities at upper secondary level. I decided to address concerns by investing some

research in Greece. The formal request was forwarded to the Institute of Educational Policy, an institution which replaced the former Pedagogical Institute in 2012.

time in strengthening trust during the interview. The fact that I am an adult educator with work experience in VET has resonated with interviewees. The profile of participant teachers will be presented next.

4.4.2.2 Profile of participant teachers

Eleven female teachers and 17 male teachers in total participated in the interview study. Instead of codes, I have assigned pseudonyms to teachers in an alphabetical order.

In Greece, I conducted interviews with three female teachers and 11 male teachers (see Table 4.2, p. 105). The perceived difference in the number of women and men may pertain to the vocational areas operating in vocational education during the interview period. The interviews lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. According to information shared, all female teachers deliver Information Technology (IT) courses. Three of the male teachers teach Finance and Administration courses (or human care courses), with the remaining eight delivering machinery-based courses: Agriculture; Auto Mechanics; Electrical (and Electronic) Engineering; Electronics. Two are based in Trikala, five in Thessaloniki East and the remaining seven in Thessaloniki West. Eleven teach in morning schools, whilst three work in evening schools. During the interview period, some were teaching at different types of vocational school to complete the required hours of teaching. All participant teachers hold a higher (academic or vocational) education degree and the required teaching permit. Five hold postgraduate qualifications, whilst the majority has experience of the industry. One of the participant teachers is a deputy head teacher and one is a programme manager.

In England, I carried out interviews with six male teachers and eight female teachers (see Table 4.3, p. 106), thus avoiding the gender gap in the analysis and discussion of findings. The interviews lasted between 25 and 50 minutes. All female teachers and one male teacher deliver human care courses: Business Studies; Childhood Studies; Early Years and Care; Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy; Health and Social Care; Hospitality and Tourism. The remaining five male teachers teach machinery-based courses: Electrical and Electronic Engineering; Engineering; Horticulture; IT. Four are based in East Yorkshire, five in North Yorkshire, three in South Yorkshire, and two in West Yorkshire. Some would deliver both A-level and vocational (BTEC) courses, some would work at both sixth form and further education colleges, and some would teach on different courses in the same Department. Participant teachers hold a higher degree; two started their career as an apprentice and two have acquired work-based learning. Three hold postgraduate qualifications, whilst the majority has

experience of the industry. Six of the participant teachers are subject leaders (or programme managers).

Table 4.2

Participant teachers in Greece

Pseudonym	Gender	Specialty	Classification	Experience of industry
Artemis	Female	IT	Machinery-based	n/a
Bela	Female	IT	Machinery-based	Yes
Chrysa	Female	IT	Machinery-based	n/a
Andreas	Male	IT	Machinery-based	n/a
Christos	Male	Electrical Engineering	Machinery-based	n/a
Dimos	Male	Agriculture	Machinery-based	Yes
Fanis	Male	IT	Machinery-based	Yes
Ikaros	Male	Electronics	Machinery-based	Yes
Kosmas	Male	Auto Mechanics	Machinery-based	Yes
Loukas	Male	Finance & Administration (Accounting)	Human care	Yes
Minos	Male	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	Machinery-based	Yes
Nikolas	Male	Finance & Administration (Tourism)	Human care	Yes
Orestes	Male	Finance & Administration	Human care	Yes
Panos	Male	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	Machinery-based	Yes

In general, those delivering the more technically-based courses would provide short but meaningful responses. IT teachers (nearly all based in Greece) would provide responses complemented by an attempt to interpret aspects of vocational education under study. Those teaching human care courses would interpret social phenomena under discussion, thus linking their answers to social cohesion issues. These points indicate that VET may promote learning as becoming what one's occupation represents (see Colley et al., 2003).

Table 4.3

Participant teachers in England

Pseudonym	Gender	Specialty	Classification	Experience of industry
Alexa	Female	Childhood Studies	Human care	Yes
Beth	Female	Catering & Hospitality Travel & Tourism	Human care	Yes
Celia	Female	Health & Social Care	Human care	Yes
Daisy	Female	Business Studies	Human care	n/a
Elinor	Female	Business, Finance & IT	Human care (B/F)	Yes
Fran	Female	Early Years & Care	Human care	n/a
Greta	Female	Beauty Therapy	Human care	Yes
Hope	Female	Hairdressing	Human care	Yes
Adam	Male	Early Years	Human care	n/a
Ben	Male	Electrical & Electronic Engineering	Machinery-based	Yes
Clive	Male	IT & Computing	Machinery-based	Yes
Dylan	Male	Engineering	Machinery-based	n/a
Edan	Male	Horticulture	Machinery-based	Yes
Floyd	Male	(Green) Engineering	Machinery-based	Yes

Furthermore, I interviewed three teachers whose interviews provide background information to findings from the main 28 interviews. Two took place in Greece, one with a teacher teaching academic courses in a morning vocational school, and one with a teacher who used to deliver one of the discontinued courses and was an administrator during the interview period. In England, I interviewed a teacher delivering applied A-level courses in a sixth form college.

4.4.3 Semi-structured interviewing

I will now discuss the method of and reasons for choosing semi-structured interview to produce data. I will then present the interview guide I specifically created for the interview study.

4.4.3.1 Using the method of semi-structured interview

The interview process can be viewed as a formal discussion between a researcher-interviewer and a participant-interviewee around a topic of common interest; the researcher has the questions and the participant is expected to have the answers (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). It is considered formal because there is an agenda for the interview meeting; the interview is normally recorded; consent of the interviewee is

usually required in writing. The discussion can be held in person, via email or over the telephone.

The main types of interviewing identified in the literature consulted are defined in terms of their degree of structure and flexibility. Structured and unstructured interviews are found at the two ends of the spectrum, with semi-structured interviews positioned in between. In qualitative research, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are favoured and could demonstrate "quite a lot of variability between them" (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). This possibly explains why the term *qualitative interview* is used instead in certain contexts.

This study is built on the method of face-to-face semi-structured interview. To support the interview process, I created an interview guide with topics for discussion, flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of the interviews I conducted in each country. It was developed on the basis of key characteristics of the selected method: the organisation of topics for discussion; wording and sequencing; the voice of research participants; flexibility in questions.

Generally, an interview guide is used to organise and conduct semi-structured interviews. The guide would include common topics or questions grouped together, allowing the same topics or questions to be posed to different participants. It would enable the researcher to prioritise topics, identify which aspects of each topic to focus on, and manage time allocated for each interview. When I started organising my interview guide, I set the definition of vocational education first and the issue of social cohesion last. I decided to move from issues more closely related to the economic role of vocational education to those associated with the social role; I considered the latter more challenging.

The wording and sequencing of the topics or questions can change to accommodate the needs of each interview. Therefore, topics or questions can be sequenced to maintain the flow of each discussion, and elicited responses can indicate what needs to be addressed next. Given that this study is framed by two countries and languages, I would adapt the wording of the questions to the rules of each language. Drawing upon my experience as an adult educator, there were instances where I used words or phrases articulated by participant teachers to structure my next question. In this way, I expected the question to resonate with teachers more. In certain instances, teachers followed a similar process and incorporated part of my question in their response. This applies mainly, but not only, to vocational teachers in Greece. Teachers would generally summarise the main points of a personal experience or opinion shared

with me. There were times when elicited answers highlighted the aspect of the topic to be discussed next; teachers had already touched upon it. I would then consider adapting the sequencing to have questions flow more naturally.

Each research participant is normally encouraged to discuss a topic or provide a response to a question in their own voice. This can be achieved when the researcher structures questions which allow participants' perceptions to come through. Elicited responses can include "'rambling' and going off at tangents" expected to unveil what the participant considers "relevant and important" (Bryman, 2012, p. 470; quotation marks in original). This can find explanation in the argument that "the same questions have different meanings for different people" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 352). Rambling still feels like a challenge. On the one hand, participants may need their time to think and construct their answer; rambling may be part of a process leading to insightful thinking. On the other hand, every interview is usually allocated specific time which may lead to time pressure. In such instances, I would remind myself that this forms part of data to be processed.

Omitting or adding questions is another characteristic of semi-structured interviews. This indicates that "particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted or additional ones included" (Robson, 2002, p. 270). Additional questions may cover follow-up or clarifying questions, in order to enable the researcher "to go into more depth or clear up any misunderstandings" (p. 275) during the interview process. Where I considered it manageable, I would pose follow-up questions to ensure that I can better understand an experience or opinion held by a participant teacher. I would refer to relevant policy matters as a prompt for clarification. To give an example, when teachers expressed concerns as to whether vocational education can contribute to the creation of new jobs, I would point to relevant policies to reach deeper understanding. In both Greece and England, there were instances where teachers illustrated the point they were making with an example from school or college life.

I used an interview guide to organise and conduct interviews. I would adapt the wording and sequencing of the topics or questions to the needs of each interview. I would encourage participant teachers to respond to questions in their own voice. I would omit or add questions where considered necessary. In other words, I conducted *qualitative* interviews.

4.4.3.2 Reasons for choosing the method of semi-structured interview

The reasons for choosing semi-structured interview over (standardised) structured or unstructured interview (with or without a topic guide) will emerge from a brief comparison between key characteristics of each type of interviewing.

In structured interviewing, the wording and sequencing of questions remain the same (Robson, 2002). This could preclude the possibility of addressing the needs of each interview and posing follow-up or clarifying questions. According to Matthews and Ross (2010), one of the advantages of structured interviewing is the ability of the researcher to retain control over the discussion by determining "the questions and range of answers" (p. 217). This could then hinder research participants in getting their voice through, and the researcher in identifying stimulating aspects of the discussion.

In unstructured interviewing, the discussion fundamentally takes the form of a story told by each research participant; this story is at the heart of the interview and reflects individual interpretation of the research topic (Matthews & Ross, 2010). In comparison with structured interviewing, in unstructured interviews control over the discussion and data production is bestowed upon research participants. It is assumed that this could be challenging for a research student. Robson (2002) asserts that "as a research tool, it is not an easy option for the novice" (p. 278). The method of semi-structured interview could then be a helpful tool for the novice researcher, enabling them to share with participants control over the interview process and data production.

In this study, I requested the voice of participant teachers in the form of views and experiences of vocational education and its relation to social cohesion, in times of economic crisis. Drawing a parallel to the policy document study, teachers narrated a *story*; it was the story of vocational education and social cohesion, which revolved around specific topics or questions, and was framed by the economic crisis. These topics enabled me to cover similar aspects between the cases of Greece and England. I considered it important to maintain some balance in control over the interview process. I selected semi-structured interviewing on the premise that it is a useful tool for discussing in depth topics of common interest with participant teachers; allowing for an explanation where there may be a gap in discussion; maintaining the flow of discussion. The interview guide I used to support the process will be presented next.

4.4.3.3 The interview guide

The interview guide will be first presented in a discursive way, followed by the actual guide (see Appendix 00, p. 00). Key issues discussed in the theoretical part of the study form (part of) topics of discussion with participant teachers in Greece and England.

The starting point of the interview would be to define the meaning of vocational education. Given that it is expected to serve different purposes in different historical contexts (Billet, 2011; European Commission, 2011), I encouraged teachers to share their understanding of vocational education or vocational course in current society. This would lead to a discussion of the learning content and, in particular, the skills developed through vocational education. Interest would lie in vocational (professional) and social skills, those not strictly associated with employment. I phrased the question about social skills in a broad way, in order to understand what teachers consider most important: the development of soft skills required in the workplace or those applicable in everyday interaction.

Vocational students are widely perceived as young people who are not interested in academic study or do not perform well academically (European Commission, 2011). I posed the broad question of who the vocational students are, in order to elicit teachers' perceptions of motivation for vocational education. My question about what vocational students enjoy most about their study was my attempt to identify students' feelings of inclusion in vocational education, a feeling assumed to permit awareness of being accepted by and belonging to a community. I asked teachers about their students' future goals to understand how vocational students tend to place themselves in life; in particular, the labour market and society. Given that teachers have a sound knowledge of the educational reality, I assumed that they would be familiar with students' goals and dreams. This question unveiled the impact of the economic crisis mainly on young people in Greece.

The social aspect of learning has recently found a prominent place in the discourse of vocational education. I thus posed questions about the interaction between teachers and students, with the focus on expectations from each other. Vocational teachers are expected to assume a dual role, that of the traditional teacher and the skilled worker (Lucas et al., 2012). My interest would lie in identifying whether teachers tend to give priority to a certain role in classroom-based vocational education or balance roles. Given that vocational education is associated with vocational preparation (Pring, 2007), I asked teachers whether they would view students as kids or young adults.

When teachers started to reply that their students are actually adults, I realised that I need to be more flexible in that question.

The role of vocational education in the labour market and the local community formed a topic of discussion; this is a recurring theme in the EU policy context. I aimed to explore whether in times of economic crisis, interest lies in economic growth or social development. In this light, I discussed parity of esteem, directly with teachers in England and indirectly in Greece. A possible explanation may be the difficulty to trace the notion of *parity of esteem* in the Greek policy context. Therefore, responses to this question constitute background information.

The school can be perceived as a community where students as members of that community share time and space (Coleman, 1988; Dewey, 1916/1966). I posed the question of whether students can develop a sense of belonging and/or identity in terms of their area of study. The aim would be to trace the possibility of developing social ties through vocational education. The part about identity formation would be discussed directly in Greece. This may pertain to the fact that students pursue a single vocational specialty throughout their studies.

Questions related to social cohesion would be set towards the end of the interview. Based on policy documents produced in England (see Chapter 1), I enquired into the role of vocational education in changing, or improving, or transforming the life of students. I used these three verbs interchangeably, with the verb *transform* used mainly by teachers in England. Students finding their place in society would be another related topic; a broad question to permit teachers to specify their responses. Furthermore, I posed the question about the role of vocational education in social cohesion and the fostering of peace, or balance, or harmony. I thus encouraged teachers to share their perceptions of social cohesion. I intended to pose the question about vocational education contributing to a fairer society. I soon realised that there was personal resonance in that question and decided to leave it aside.

4.4.4 Using thematic analysis

I have used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret my interview data. I found the technique useful in reducing my data, and developing codes and themes for discussion. I relied on the work of Boyatzis (1998) and the application of NVivo (Version 10 for Windows) software to translate my data into codes and themes, as presented next.

4.4.4.1 Defining thematic analysis

Boyatzis (1998) defines thematic analysis as the process which enables the researcher to observe their data, identify underlying concepts or themes, encode them and interpret them to understand the social phenomenon under study. The researcher carries "emotional, value-laden, and theoretical preconceptions, preferences, and worldviews" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 8) into analysis. This may impede analysis and interpretation, which the researcher can address by acknowledging preconceived assumptions possibly influencing the development of thematic analysis.

To use thematic analysis successfully, the researcher needs to follow three steps (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003b). The first step requires that the researcher becomes familiar with their data. This can be achieved by selecting an indicative sample and mapping it onto the research questions (or purpose of study). The second refers to the identification of recurring patterns or themes in sample data. Themes can expand to include "the general atmosphere of an interview" (Ritchie et al., 2003b, p. 221). Recurring themes can be matched to topics in the interview guide, in order to explore possible connections between themes and topics. The final step is to cluster themes "within an overall framework" (p. 221).

Boyatzis (1998) argues that there are three main approaches to data analysis: the deductive (based on theory), the inductive (based on data), and the combination of both (deductive-inductive). The inductive approach requires that the researcher delineates the criteria for selecting and translating data fragments into codes and themes; "the quality of the criterion selection and the sampling will determine the quality of the code and subsequently the quality of the findings" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 42). These criteria would be embedded in the definition of a code.

When it became clear that I had rich interview data, I decided to follow the inductive logic. The intention was to enable the voice of participant teachers to emerge and reveal indicative perceptions of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis. I used relevant literature and the pilot study as a guide to data observation and analysis, in order to produce a piece of work which would resonate with others in the wider academic community. Though individuals hold unique experiences, these may have some characteristics in common or be developed within a common context. In this light, I borrowed and adapted elements from the deductive approach. I still consider my approach inductive because this is the driving force in my study which allowed for my data to illuminate themes for discussion in both the theoretical and the findings part of the study; in particular, themes which could

contribute to the generation of new knowledge. These themes were used as a guide to establishing the theoretical framework of the study and organising key issues in the analysis of the interview data into chapters and sections.

The general atmosphere of the interview study forms part of the process of reflexivity, as presented further below. An overall thematic framework for analysis was created and finalised following validation of research. These points will be discussed in more detail next.

4.4.4.2 The process of developing codes and themes

Drawing upon Boyatzis (1998), I organised the development of codes and themes into four steps, and my data analysis into the Greek and the English part of the study. I started working on the English part first to ensure that I could retain some distance from my data and remain as neutral as possible throughout the process. As an adult educator, I am concerned about the achievement and progression of learners in any given learning context.

The first step was to read the interview transcripts of each part separately. I first summarised the information in each response provided by participant teachers, and then looked for features of vocabulary within each response which could serve as a summary of the key point raised. In the case of lengthy responses, I highlighted more than one string of words corresponding to more than one key point. I organised information provided by teachers into summary phrases which constitute the codes. The use of NVivo (Version 10 for Windows) software mainly assisted me in cross-checking codes (already identified in paper). I made a query using a key term (i.e., confidence) to find synonyms or similar words and phrases (i.e., belief in oneself). I then mapped one code onto the other to create themes. The interview transcripts would be scanned and targeted information retrieved at a quick pace.

I then used a sample of five interview transcripts to compare the associated summary accounts, in order to identify patterns and understand where vocational teachers discuss similar issues of interest. I repeated the process for the remaining interviews using the sample as a point of reference. Identified patterns constitute the themes. They are purposefully broad enough to allow for some in-depth analysis by exploring different aspects of the same theme, and considering characteristics which pertain to Greece and England.

I created a statement code to illuminate links between codes and links to themes. I worked on a definition for each code using highlighted strings of words as integral

elements of the definition. The meaning assigned by each participant teacher to the topics of discussion is embedded in the definitions. This would lead to the development of a thematic framework for analysis which includes the themes, the codes applied to data fragments, and the definitions (see Appendix F). I finalised the framework following email discussion with the colleague in Greece who contributed to the reliability of the study.

4.5 Determining the quality of research

In the last section, I will discuss ethical issues which I took into consideration during the production and analysis of my research data. I will present the strategy developed to translate oral and written text, and the strategies followed to ensure trustworthiness in research. Instead of discussing limitations, I will touch upon reflexivity in the research study.

4.5.1 Ethical issues

Given that this study is organised into two sub-studies, I have made every possible effort to consider issues pertaining to each sub-study. The main ethical issue concerns the protection of participant teachers in the interview study. During the initial contact with vocational school head teachers in Greece and college principals in England, I explicitly stated that anonymity of both vocational teachers willing to help with my study and vocational schools (or colleges) would be respected. This was reiterated at the onset of each interview meeting. The informed consent form I specifically created for the interview study in English and translated into Greek was completed in duplicate: I obtained a completed copy from participant teachers and handed them a copy signed by me. Each teacher was aware that participation in the interview study is voluntary and could withdraw at any point of the interview meeting.

I gave participant teachers the option to comment on the transcript of their interview as well as to decline the use of it in the case that I presented research data at research conferences; none of the participant teachers declined the use of their interview. Though it is advisable to *keep the recording going* because some research participants might open up towards the end of the interview and continue talking (Bryman, 2012, p. 487), I made clear to teachers that the recording would end the moment the interview ended. I have chosen extracts from the interview texts which would not be related back to the identity of teachers.

In the analysis and discussion part, conscious effort has been made to treat both interview and document data with dignity and respect; neither judge the opinions of teachers and their truth nor criticise the voice of policy-makers communicated through the policy documents under study. I thus repeated the analysis of both interview and policy texts keeping a certain distance between each analysis to compare my initial notes with the final ones. I focussed on discussing findings in a neutral tone. I used the three interviews not included in the interview study as background information to cross-check my interpretation of findings. I considered it important to include extracts from both interview and document data which may generate new knowledge and have an impact on the wider academic community.

Treating the document data and the interview data with dignity and respect formed part of the objectives of the study. Treating in confidence personal information provided by participant teachers was an issue taken into consideration; being critical without criticising was one more issue of concern.

4.5.2 Translating oral and written text

Translating oral and written text is considered key to the quality of research, and to ensuring that the voice of the interviewee or the author of a policy document gets through the translated text. Developing a strategy for transcribing interviews and translating text into the target language emerges as "a matter of judgment and interpretation" (Matthews & Ross, 2011, p. 164). I will argue that I have applied two different strategies for translating oral and written text.

When I started transcribing interviews, I aimed for a fuller version of transcript to include hesitation patterns (such as *um*) and repetition of words or short phrases. To manage time effectively, I used the DSS Player (Version 6 for Windows) transcription software. The time invested in each interview was approximately double the time stated in relevant books. This led to the realisation that there may be a shorter version equally acceptable. Though I had emailed participant teachers with the fuller version of transcript, I decided to follow the standard version and incorporate textual fragments into the thesis accordingly. To retain the flow of analysis and discussion, hesitation or repetition patterns indicating the interviewee's attempt to construct an utterance have been omitted from the final version.

Translating a text from the source language into the target language requires more than possessing sound knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar and syntax of both working languages. It involves deeper understanding of "more subtle matters of

connotation and meaning". The researcher would therefore work towards "a reasonable approximation" (Matthews & Ross, 2011, p. 166) of what is conveyed. When I started to translate interview transcripts from Greek into English, it became clear that terms and phrases which form part of shared knowledge in one culture may not be understood in other cultures. To illuminate this point, I will provide two examples. The first draws upon the discourse of vocational education in England, whilst the second is taken from interview data produced in Greece.

In the United Kingdom (England), the phrase *parity of esteem* has a special place in the discourse of vocational education (see Wolf, 2011). It is mainly used to discuss the way vocational qualifications are valued by employers and society when compared to academic qualifications. Its meaning is embedded in the culturally shared knowledge about vocational education. In Greece, there is currently no standard translation for this phrase; instead, the term *equivalence* is used (see Hellenic Republic, 2006). When addressing the topic of *parity of esteem* in interviews with vocational teachers in Greece, I decided to be more flexible in the construction of the relevant question, in order to avoid misunderstanding.

In Greece, when discussing vocational students with participant teachers, a specific word-phrase was frequently used by teachers to refer to students: *paidia-ta paidia*. At some point, I followed their example. The equivalent word in English is *children*; however, this does not convey the same meaning as the original word. In everyday discourse, *ta paidia* could be used with the intention of denoting a positive or protective attitude towards the individuals of reference, regardless of age; this forms culturally shared knowledge. This became evident in pilot interviews and inspired me into posing the question of how teachers view their students, in the classroom or the workshop. Where I considered it necessary, I have translated the Greek word into English as *students* and included the original word in brackets. I have followed the same pattern where a technical term in English has more than one version in Greek.

All non-published translations from Greek are mine. In the context of the APA style, a non-published translation is considered a paraphrase. As such, it is not used as a quotation and it does not require direct quotation marks (Lee, 2014). With regards to the theoretical part of my study, where there are references to literature in Greek, I have followed the APA style citing in the author and year of original publication; I have not included the page number because it is not required. For the analysis and discussion part, I decided to follow a different pattern. I would translate a passage from a policy document or an interview text, and incorporate it into the main body of the thesis within

double quotation marks. I decided to do so to delineate boundaries between my understanding (and interpretation) of a passage and the actual translation (or paraphrase).

4.5.3 Ensuring trustworthiness in research

There are various strategies used to ensure trustworthiness in research. The decision would depend on the paradigm followed by the researcher (Golafshani, 2003; Sobh & Perry, 2006). Strategies such as validation and reliability would be favoured by quantitative researchers with the intention to examine the objective reality and discover the objective truth free of any bias. Strategies such as credibility would be preferred by qualitative researchers in their attempt to explore various aspects of the social phenomenon under study. As CDA practitioners argue, there can be no such thing as objective truth (see 4.3.2.2). Rather, there is a subjective truth which is determined by the meaning people make of their experiences. Triangulation may be a strategy or a technique used to ensure trustworthiness, depending on the purpose of its use. As I am following a more traditional approach to qualitative research, I will first touch upon validity and reliability in my research, and then discuss issues related to credibility.

4.5.3.1 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are considered central to the quality of research, mainly by quantitative researchers. The concept of *validity* indicates that the research data produced and analysed to address the set research questions are "a close representation of the aspect of social reality" (Marshall & Rossman, 2010, p. 53) under study. The concept of *reliability* indicates that in the case that the same or another researcher decides to conduct that research on the basis of the same research design and hence in the same way, they would expect to reach the initial findings.

In this study, there are two sources of evidence to address the research questions: selected state policy documents and interviews with vocational teachers in Greece and England. The main aspect of social reality under study is the institution of vocational education. With regards to validity, the policy documents under study convey the voice of the policy-makers; it is considered the dominant voice in the discourse of vocational education as it frames and organises the action of interested parties. Selected policy documents were produced prior to and following the 2007-2008 economic crisis. Regarding vocational teachers, their voice is considered less dominant yet it embraces awareness of diverse aspects of educational reality. They would thus

117

offer a closer representation of educational reality through their experiences and opinions; in particular, the reality of vocational education. Given that the research interest lies in understanding the direction of vocational education in general and not specific to a vocational area or specialty, every possible effort was made to interview teachers representing a wider range of vocational areas and courses.

Regarding reliability, being able to reproduce the same research and the same findings may not be of great significance in qualitative research. What matters is to produce findings which resonate with other researchers. In this light, in order to check whether the findings from both sources of evidence resonate, I discussed with *others* the construction of the thematic framework for and the coding of the interview analysis as well as part of the documentary analysis. Following the example of social science colleagues (i.e., Nurhadi, 2015), I presented the initial thematic framework and the coding of the last five interviews I conducted in England only to my supervisor. Through an informal social network, I emailed a colleague in Greece (working in the field of VET) with extracts from five interviews I conducted in Greece and the request to apply codes on the basis of the revised framework (produced in English); these extracts are included in the analysis and discussion part. Three of the set codes were used in a different way. In the first case, the extract I had selected may have been out of context and difficult to understand. In the second case, the definition may not have encompassed all aspects of the code (and theme). In the third case, we may have approached the main concept differently. That discussion assisted me in finalising the thematic framework. Finally, I discussed part of the documentary analysis with an expert academic in learning and work in England. That discussion facilitated the process of making boundaries between concepts used in the analysis clear as well as justifying document selection. Both my colleague and the expert academic are aware that our discussion forms part of my effort to establish validity and reliability of my research.

Next, I will discuss how I have established credibility of the analysis of my research data.

4.5.3.2 Credibility and triangulation

In their influential work *Natural Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 289-331) propose a framework for the establishment of trustworthiness of the analysis of qualitative data on the basis of four strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as "the naturalist's equivalents for the conventional terms 'internal validity,' 'extremal validity,' 'reliability,' and 'objectivity'" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.

300; quotation marks in original). I will focus on credibility and the techniques used to allow for the voice of policy-makers and participant teachers to be heard. These techniques are as follows: prolonged engagement; persistent observation; peer debriefing; triangulation.

The meaning and purpose of prolonged engagement and persistent observation are encapsulated in the following statement:

> If the purpose of prolonged engagement is to render the inquirer open to the multiple influences…that impinge upon the phenomenon being studied, the purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail. If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304)

The researcher engages in the social phenomenon under study to establish a more solid understanding of the topic of research. They would observe how the (learning) organisation operates, discuss observations with its members, and develop social networks to establish credibility. The construction of meaning of shared experiences would turn into a collaborative process. Peer debriefing refers to the collaboration between the researcher and peers who are not engaged in that research to address potential impact of the researcher's attitudes and behaviour, motivation and goals on the analysis of the data. The feedback offered and negotiated is expected to contribute to the establishment of credibility.

While I was organising my documentary analysis and interview study, I made systematic efforts to enrich my understanding of the phenomenon of vocational education. I consulted international and European academic and policy literature relevant to my topic of interest (VET) to acquire a broader perspective on the projected relation between vocational education and social cohesion. Publications by learning organisations such as Cedefop and UNESCO enabled me to identify universal issues of European and national concern. I studied economic columns in established newspapers in Greece and England in an attempt to fully understand the impact of the economic crisis on everyday life. While I was selecting education policy documents for the dataset and devising the interview guide, I discussed issues related to vocational education with members of my informal networks. I treated them as peers who are not engaged in my research and hence are able to hold a more neutral perspective on vocational education.

I researched online information about vocational schools (in Greece) and colleges (in England) potentially interested in my study and interesting to visit. Therefore, I was in a position to capture the culture of the schools, the colleges and the community that surrounds them.

With regards to the interview study, I conducted face-to-face interviews, a fact which enabled me to observe the physical response of participant teachers to issues raised for discussion. I was thus able to get some indication of themes for analysis. When I visited the schools and colleges engaged in my research through participant teachers, I had the opportunity to observe how teachers interact with students within the premises and outside the classroom. Such observations tend to form part of background information. During the interview process, teachers shared with me their experiences and viewpoints of vocational education. I am convinced that they have shared their truth with me, that is, the way they make meaning of life experiences. Creating an emotionally safe space to open up may have facilitated trust and reciprocity. I considered it important to practise active listening and support teachers to reflect on the questions, construct answers in their own way, and get their voice heard. There were a couple of instances when teachers stated that they had not thought about certain questions before and so needed time to think. I consider that to be evidence of trust and reciprocity.

When I started working on the analysis of my research data, I participated with paper presentations in scientific conferences on issues related to VET. I presented part of my findings and entered into discussion with experts in my field of interest. As such, I had the opportunity to put to the test my approach to analysis, my strengths as a junior researcher and the limitations of my research. I received feedback on my presentations which has contributed to my becoming more aware of my research practice. I identified points which I may not have considered of great research interest; hence I decided to revisit them for a deeper analysis. On the other side, there were points which had attracted my research interest yet they would not resonate with peers. I revisited them to decide whether I may have not made my point clear or I held different perspectives from my peers.

With regards to triangulation, Denzin (1970/2006) underlines that there are four different modes defined by what is combined: data, investigators, theories and methods. Bryman (2012) argues that two of them tend to be widely used: methods of research and sources of evidence (data). Triangulation may be used in both quantitative and qualitative research, in order to avoid any misunderstanding of or to cross-check

findings. In this study, the two sets of data have been investigated in two different ways: CDA and thematic analysis. Though research data have not been produced with the intention to cross-check findings from each set, I have combined them in Chapters 8 and 9 in a way which could support triangulation. The purpose of the combination is to listen to different voices; in particular, the more dominant voices of policy-makers, as articulated through the selected education policy documents, and the less dominant voices of participant teachers. Combining different voices would illuminate the multiple meanings of experiences of vocational education, in order to reach a better understanding of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

Reflexivity is considered a technique for establishing trustworthiness, as in keeping a reflexive journal (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I will approach this technique as a strategy in its own right with the intention to touch upon how I have grown and developed as a researcher.

4.5.4 Reflexivity in the research study

To demonstrate understanding of the research reality, researchers are advised to delineate limitations to their research design (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 76). Following the CDA practice, I decided to embed reflexivity in the research study instead of limitations. By practising reflexivity and identifying any biases that may have affected the analysis and discussion of findings, main parts of the research reality would be unveiled. I will argue that issues pertaining to *reverse culture shock* may have influenced my research practice.

For convenience I started conducting interviews with vocational teachers in England. Around that time, I had been based in England for a period of time which enabled me to be familiar with specific cultural norms. Generally, participant teachers would share their opinions and experiences in a more neutral and less direct style. Identifying what was considered strength or limitation of vocational education was not a difficult process. When I returned to my hometown, I started organising the Greek part of the interview study. The element of surprise would penetrate the process. Participant teachers would generally respond to my questions in a more expressive and more direct style. Initially, I was surprised by that style, and associated it with the fact that certain proposed or enacted policy initiatives for vocational education in Greece had been met with scepticism. For some reason, I had the feeling that something was missing in my data; something was not the same. When I returned to England to complete my

interview study, I realised that I may have expected teachers in Greece and England to respond in a similar style. In other words, I may have experienced reverse culture shock.

My experience of reverse culture shock did not affect the use of politeness strategies in both Greek and English. Elaborating myself, in England, participant teachers and I addressed each other by our first name having made certain that this was acceptable to all. To introduce the more challenging topics of discussion, I used polite phrases such as "May I ask why/how". I would then thank participants for their response. In Greece, I used the strategy of the second person plural form. This form is used when interacting with new acquaintances to express politeness. It is used when interacting with people of a certain age to denote respect for their life experiences. This is considered part of shared cultural knowledge. In both Greece and England, where (a couple of) teachers were of a certain age and had considerable amount of teaching experience, control may have been influenced by the identified cultural norms.

Besides shifting between communication strategies, I realise that I may have shifted between roles: that of the adult educator and that of the student researcher. This duality may have affected the way I responded to certain parts of my discussion with participant teachers. I have been a practitioner (and adult educator) in the field of VET for a considerable time. As an adult educator, I consider myself part of the educational reality in Greece, being familiar with the organisation of that reality. I therefore found it easier to follow references made by participant teachers to part of that organisation, yet more difficult to distance myself from its significance for young people. On the other side, as a student researcher, I consider my relation to the educational reality in England more indirect. I thus found it easier to distance myself from possible implications of the organisation of that reality. In other words, I entered into discussion with teachers holding a dual role. As a student researcher, I focussed on sharing control over the process and outcome of each interview. As an educator, I focussed on building trust and reciprocity with teachers.

The question arises as to what I could have done differently. I realise that I could have had informal discussions with colleagues in Greece prior to the interview period. I may have readjusted more easily to prevailing communication patterns in Greece. In England, I organised informal discussions about education prior to the interview period. I turned time into a valuable tool for keeping a distance from my interview data and analysis. During the interview period, I learned that flexibility may apply to elements of research other than the interview guide. Taking into consideration that I have conducted

research holding (at least) two roles, flexibility indicates the need to shift roles to adapt to the needs of each interview.

4.6. Concluding

In this chapter, I have discussed the methods and techniques I chose to use, in order to manage and analyse my research data. I have applied CDA to the selected six (sets of) policy documents under study, in order to understand and interpret the dominant discourse of policy-makers. I have used thematic analysis to analyse and discuss the 28 interviews I have included in my interview study. This technique has enabled me to identity the topics and issues of interest to participant teachers, and allow for their voice to be heard. Findings derived from the research data will be presented in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 5

Policy Direction for Vocational Education in Greece and England

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have investigated the policy direction for vocational education in Greece and England over the period of 2003-2013. I have addressed both research questions. I have examined how vocational education is envisaged in the policy documents under study to support its students to find their place in the labour market and society in Greece and England. I have looked for some indication of the direction of vocational education in terms of its perceived contribution to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. Findings from the documentary analysis indicate that vocational education is directed towards strengthening human capital development rather than balancing human capital and social capital. During the period of time under study, state policies propose that the vocational tradition should be maintained. In the wake of the economic crisis, strengthening participation in vocational education and subsequent specialised preparation for the labour market emerges as a pressing need for both Greece and England. The fact that the two governments in power represent different political philosophies highlights the importance policy-makers place on human capital in the promotion of social cohesion. Generally, vocational students are expected to prepare for specialised and immediate employment, and to develop the ability to invest their qualifications in productivity and economic growth. These students are mainly projected as young people who do not perform well academically and hence may not be able to acquire the required level of knowledge for labour market inclusion through academic education. Vocational education would thus strengthen the ability to avoid labour market exclusion and potential marginalisation from the mainstream society; in other words, to avoid social disruption resulting from unemployment (as an aspect of economic disruption).

5.2 The research objectives

I have translated the two research questions intro three research objectives which address both questions. These objectives will introduce the wider picture of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis, which will pave the way to a more detailed understanding based on the perceptions of participant teachers. The objectives, in a form of a question, are the following:

a) What is the rationale for the proposed reforms to vocational education in Greece and England?

b) How are vocational students linguistically and socially constructed in text?

c) What are the main assumptions and arguments about vocational education?

Ball (1997) argues that education policy fundamentally introduces new reforms to the education system where "the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed or particular goals or outcomes are set" (p. 270). In the EU policy context, vocational education as part of VET is expected to serve both economic and social goals at a national and European level (Cedefop, 2009). In this light, the answer to the first question will provide some indication of the direction of vocational education and its implication for vocational students in Greece and England. The second question will reveal how vocational students are positioned in the discourse of vocational education. The third question will offer some insight into key issues in the development and delivery of vocational education which I have identified in the policy documents under study; the main assumptions and arguments about vocational education. With the EU being the wider context of my study, the national-European relation will be addressed through references to the Copenhagen Process. Instead of a concluding paragraph, there will be a comparison paragraph to facilitate comparison between the cases of Greece and England.

5.3 Rationale for the proposed reforms to vocational education

This section will shed light on the economic and social goals for vocational education in Greece and England. The concepts of *human capital* and *social capital* will be used to better understand the direction of vocational education in relation to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. As mentioned earlier, these two types of capital emerge as pillars of social cohesion and can be developed through (vocational) education. This applies to both Greece and England, with cultural differences perceived in the priorities set for vocational education; these differences will become more evident in the last section of the chapter. Six (sets of) policy documents equally distributed comprise the dataset, covering the period of 2003 (following the launch of the Copenhagen Process) through 2013 (following the Bruges Communiqué). Each policy document represents a case (see Table 4.1, p. 83). The selected policy documents will be presented in a chronological order; for convenience they will be divided into the Greek and the English policy context. The cases of Greece and England will be presented separately.

5.3.1 The case of Greece

Findings from the Greek part of the documentary analysis make it obvious that there is policy interest in maintaining the vocational tradition. Despite acknowledgment of academic discussions around the unification of academic (general) education and vocational education at upper secondary level, these discussions have not turned into action plan. Policy initiatives to integrate academic and vocational learning into the (national) vocational curriculum are projected as an attempt to widen opportunities in the fields of education and work. These initiatives can be interpreted as affirmation of the less dominant role of vocational education in education and work.

In the wake of the economic crisis, policy initiatives focus on strengthening vocational learning and specialised preparation for employment. A direct link is established between vocational education, economic growth and social cohesion. Vocational education is envisaged to contribute to the creation of more jobs, the reduction of unemployment and the increase of productivity at a local and national level. Unemployment is considered a contributing factor to economic and potential social disruption: it leads to exclusion and marginalisation. Following the enactment of the second memorandum, the impact of the economic crisis on the life of young people is widely recognised. It is implied that if in the past vocational education could link young people to more and better employment opportunities, now it could support them to encounter fewer difficulties in finding a job. In this light, policy direction tilts towards human capital enhancement rather than balancing human capital and social capital. With regards to social capital, there is concern about the ability to turn individual needs into collective goals; in particular the needs of students for their life into goals shared with employers and higher education for collective growth and development. This ability is interpreted as a necessity for the promotion of social cohesion, thus echoing Bourdieu (1986) and his argument that return (on investment) for one type of capital triggers cost for another.

The selected Greek policy documents represent three genres: the explanatory report, the bill and the policy proposal (as a response to public consultation); the first two are being treated as a report. The first document under study is the 2006 report, Organization and Operation of Secondary Vocational Education and other provisions (MoERA, 2006), as produced by the government of New Democracy prior to the economic crisis. The second is the 2011 policy proposal, Technological Lyceum: The Proposal for Technical Vocational Education (MoELLRA, 2011), as developed by the government of PASOK in the wake of the crisis and the enactment of the first

memorandum. In 2012, the policy proposal turned into the report on Technological Lyceum (MoERA, 2012); its introduction to Parliament was withdrawn. The third is the 2013 report, Restructuring of Secondary Education and other provisions (MoERA, 2013), as published by the coalition government of New Democracy and PASOK following the enactment of the second memorandum.

The 2006 report, ***Organization and Operation of Secondary Vocational Education and other provisions*** introduces the vocational lyceum and the more specialised vocational school[28] to replace the technical vocational institution. Concerns about the effectiveness of the former type of vocational school are framed by concerns about changes in the economy at a national and European level. The perceived low attractiveness of the technical vocational institutions emerges as an issue of policy concern: "they have failed as an institution to convince society of the increased need to be directed towards Technical and Vocational Education, in order to attract students" (MoERA, 2006, p. 1).

Failure of the technical vocational institutions to meet the expectations of society is understood to be twofold. On the one hand, they have not ensured "the opportunity for comprehensive access to Tertiary Educational Institutions" MoERA, 2006, p. 1) and hence access to equal opportunities in education. On the other hand, they "have not been able to offer students effective entry into the labour market, nor the opportunity to constantly adapt to the emerging new conditions of enterprises and the economy" (p. 1). Effective entry would refer to employment relevant to vocational studies. Vocational leavers would find jobs which were not related to their studies, so the state and the individual investment in their studies would not yield related returns. Adaptability is considered key to securing employment, "thereby avoiding unemployment and social exclusion" (p. 1). Furthermore, it is central to lifelong learning: in order to be able to adapt to a changing economy and labour market, the individual needs to engage in lifelong learning activities. The 2011 policy proposal would reiterate the association between unemployment and social exclusion.

What is *desirable* to achieve through the policy reform to vocational education is a society (and economy) where young people find employment relevant to their studies, become lifelong learners and remain included in the labour market. The state and the individual would then be able to acquire return on investment in vocational

---

[28] The more specialised schools have fallen under non-formal education since 2013. As such, emphasis is being placed on vocational lyceums herein.

education. Social cohesion challenges such as exclusion and marginalisation would be avoided.

The 2011 policy proposal, ***Technological Lyceum: The Proposal for Technical Vocational Education*** promotes a new type of vocational school to arise from the merging of the vocational lyceum and the more specialised vocational school: the technological lyceum. Low participation among upper secondary students in vocational education continues to be an issue for policy-makers in 2011, along with perceived lack of clear progression routes to the labour market and higher education for all vocational school leavers. What has changed is the economic context of the policy proposal: it is framed by the economic austerity in Greece. Vocational education is perceived as a strong lever to assist the country to get out of the economic crisis and into economic development. To be more precise, it is envisaged as "a strong component for creative competition with social cohesion" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 2). The use of the attributive adjective *creative* implies that there is something positive in competition: it leads to constructive behaviour and positive outcomes which support social cohesion. It is emphasised that successful combination of economic and social goals will be determined by the individual and their qualifications. The individual is thus attributed a determining role in tackling economic and potential social disruption: "It is clear that the model of growth we seek to achieve –that is, how economic progress is combined with social cohesion- will be determined by the human factor; by the knowledge, the skills, by mastering technology" (p.3; dashes in original). In this light, vocational students are expected to contribute their knowledge and skills to economic growth and, by extension, to social cohesion.

In 2011, policy-makers advocate wider participation of vocational students in higher education. They articulate the expectation that equal access of young people to all opportunities available in the education system could lead to equal opportunities in life. Over the period of time under study, this would be the first time that social mobility found its place in the discourse of (vocational) education:

> It is also essential, for reasons of equality of opportunities, social mobility and justice…to offer the Technological Lyceum leavers the opportunity to continue their studies in tertiary education. In this way, **their career progression** [*epaggelmatiki aneliksi*] is ensured through their studies in tertiary education. (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 20; underlined and in bold in original)

Furthermore, the interrelation of education and employment is highlighted: the higher the level of education is (tertiary education), the better the prospects are to achieve progression at work. An additional fourth year offering further specialisation in school is thus proposed to provide students with "more and better employment opportunities due to greater compatibility with the demands of the production system" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 16).

The *desirable* to achieve in a society defined by the enactment of a memorandum is to view the economic crisis as an opportunity for that society to explore the benefits from vocational education and affirm its role in creativity and social cohesion. In this society, the individual realises their power to influence a course of action (for economic and social sustainability) on the back of their qualifications. It is inferred that the individual would then have fewer expectations for the state to address difficult matters such as unemployment.

The 2013 report, **Restructuring of Secondary Education and other provisions** introduces measures for general education and vocational education. The perceived low participation in vocational education and low appeal to society continue to be a policy concern. Compared to the 2011 policy proposal, the 2013 report promotes a more direct link of vocational education to the labour market through the provision of an additional period of workplace training and "additional incentives for recruitment of the Apprentice after completing the apprenticeship" (MoERA, 2013, p. 69). This provision stems from the economic austerity and the subsequent increase in youth unemployment. As policy-makers point out:

> The importance of vocational education is particularly crucial for current conditions, amid an unprecedented crisis which has resulted in youth unemployment soaring to invisible heights and the reform of vocational education may comprise one main line of tackling the problem of unemployment. (MoERA, 2013, p. 5)

The envisaged role of vocational education in combating youth unemployment is supported with the argument that vocational school leavers could have "fewer difficulties in finding employment than general education leavers" (MoERA, 2013, p. 4). This statement implies that it may be harder for academic students to get a job due to perceived lack of labour market relevance of academic education. Along the same lines, Adrianoupolitis (2008) points out that there are higher academic disciplines and qualifications which are not compatible with the labour market and hence cannot secure

employment. Incompatibility is therefore a barrier to employment and some form of cost of human investment in (vocational) education. Furthermore, the statement above indicates that in times of economic crisis, there is a shift in the process of getting a job: more opportunities for employment turn into fewer difficulties in finding employment.

In the same report, the duality between individual and collective needs is implicitly acknowledged. Policy-makers suggest that vocational education serves "sometimes conflicting and contradictory needs of the Greek society which are expressed by the Greek family, students and parents, teachers and education leaders, the labour market, tertiary education, society as a whole" (MoERA, 2013, p. 4).[29] There may be cases where students wish to pursue professionally an interest or inclination which is not compatible with the labour market or tertiary education. Tensions may then stem from unmet expectations or perceived obligations, turning into difficulties in creating social capital. Coleman (1988) highlights the significance of reciprocity in developing social capital. Should individuals fail to achieve reciprocity in trust, expectations or needs, they will probably fail to create social capital. Tensions may affect how people interact with each other and stoke further tensions in the promotion of social cohesion.

The *desirable* to achieve in a society defined by economic austerity is to enable young people to have access to some employment opportunities, including the possibility of doing an apprenticeship when they leave school. In this way, they could gain some work experience and be ready for full-time employment when the conditions permit that. This time, it is acknowledged that strengthening the role of vocational education in employment does not suffice to tackle unemployment; other policies need to be enacted as well. Employment remains the glue that keeps a society together.

Changes to the terminology of vocational education throughout the period of time under study appear to signpost changes to its envisaged direction. To be more precise, the term *technical* becomes obsolete from the 2006 report and the term *vocational* is used instead. The term *technical* reappears in the policy discourse and the 2011 proposal to denote the meaning of vocational, and the term *technological* is introduced to present the proposed type of vocational school. The proposal would not come into effect and in the 2013 report *technical* and *technological* make way for *vocational*. Where the term *vocational* prevails, there may be an attempt to promote vocational preparation as a way of living: the occupation of choice would determine the

---

[29] The specific statement first appeared in the *Report on Technical Vocational Education in Secondary Education* (Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5).

way of living. Where *technical* prevails, it may indicate the nature of learning: students learn to become technicians and perform technical tasks. The use of *technological* may unveil a wider approach to vocational education in contemporary society: becoming competent on the one hand, to practice a technology-bound occupation, and on the other hand, to access the technological educational institutions (higher vocational education).

5.3.2 The case of England

In the case of England, it becomes obvious that there is strong policy interest in maintaining the vocational tradition, established long before the systematic delivery of vocational education in Greece. Vocational education is projected as a tool to strengthen productivity and competitiveness through the individual student and their specialised preparation for employment. The perceived low participation of young people in vocational education raises concerns about the economic performance of individuals and business organisations. The policy intention to address the perceived ongoing lack of progression into immediate employment or higher education for all students on vocational courses reveals concerns about issues related to social cohesion. Lack of progression indicates that vocational students may not be able to get included in the labour market and the economy through employment relevant to their vocational studies. Widening participation in higher education emerges as a tool to secure access to all available educational opportunities and to promote full participation in life and society.

Policy-makers attribute to vocational education a role in the empowerment of young people and the improvement of life chances. Regardless of the proposed or enacted reforms to the vocational curriculum, the content of learning is expected to enable those who do not perform well academically or those who are not in education, training or employment, to reengage in learning and remain in education. Along with the development of knowledge and skills targeted at specialised employment and labour market inclusion, vocational students would develop attitudes and behaviour suitable for inclusion in the society that surrounds them. Therefore, vocational education would assume a contributing role in the transformation of the life of young people and the promotion of social justice through education.

In comparison with Greece, the selected English policy documents similarly represent three genres: the green paper, the white paper and the government response (as a policy paper). The first document under study is the 2005 White Paper, *14-19 Education and Skills* (DfES, 2005), as produced by the government of the Labour Party

following the decision of the United Kingdom to not participate in the EMU. The second is the 2007 Green Paper, *Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training post-16* (DfES, 2007), as developed by the same government but under different Secretary of State. In 2007, the Green Paper turned effectively into policy guidance (DCSF, 2007)[30] in the wake of the economic crisis. The third is the 2011 policy paper, *Wolf Review of Vocational Education – Government Response* (DfE, 2011), as published by the coalition government of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. It focusses entirely on vocational education and was produced during the recovery period.

The 2005 White Paper, **14-19 Education and Skills** introduces a ten-year reform programme for secondary education, including vocational education. Perceived global changes in the economy and society frame the measures proposed. A society is understood to remain cohesive when "the well-being and fulfilment of each individual young person" is ensured through the provision of "the opportunity to become educated and skilled" (DfES, 2005, pp. 10, 15). Such opportunity will enable young people to succeed at work and in social life "through hard work and dedication" (p. 22), "both here and abroad" (p. 23). Along with knowledge and skills applicable within and beyond borders, hard and dedicated work would turn a learning opportunity into a desired outcome. Therefore, the individual has the power and knowledge to succeed in life. Educated and skilled young people would support the country to address global competition and secure economic growth: "If we are to continue to attract many of the high value-added industries to this country, and to compete effectively on the global stage, then we will need far more of our population to have high levels of education" (p. 16). On the one side, they would contribute to the creation of a society defined by more harmony and less antisocial behaviour: "There is a strong and well-documented association between poor attendance and behaviour at school and later anti-social behaviour and criminality" (p. 17).

In comparison with Greece, policy-makers are similarly concerned with the perceived low participation in vocational education and its impact on economic competitiveness: "As a result of low participation, skill levels in our workforce are behind those of other similar countries. This is because many fewer people have vocational qualifications" (DfES, 2005, p. 18). The reason for low participation is associated with lack of clear progression routes: "Too many young people experience qualifications 'dead ends', where despite pursuing a further qualification, there are no

---

[30] The Green Paper and the policy guidance are being treated as a single set of documents.

clear onward routes to employment or progression to a higher level of learning" (pp. 19-20; quotation marks in original). A possible explanation lies in the following statement: "Vocational education and training for young people have low credibility and status in this country" (p. 20). In this light, the 14-19 Diploma programmes introduced in this White Paper aim to prepare for both immediate employment in occupations corresponding to economic sectors and participation in higher education. Diploma programmes would not come into full effect and would be abolished in 2010.

What is *desirable* to achieve through the policy reform to vocational education is a society (and economy) defined by economic competitiveness and social stability. A positive role is ascribed to vocational education in terms of getting young people included in education and work, in order to achieve fulfilment and wellbeing. The individual is attributed a determining role in success in life: hard and dedicated work is the ingredient of success. Where the economy is strong, wellbeing is associated with having access to life opportunities.

The 2007 Green Paper, *Raising Expectations: Staying in Education and Training post-16* is a continuation of the reform programme launched in 2005. Policy interest is directed towards gradually raising the education leaving age to 18. Like in 2005, economic and social goals are embedded in the discourse of education, including vocational education. It is implied that acquiring a level of skill higher than that usually reached at age 16 could deliver benefits at an individual and collective level. According to policy-makers:

> In addition to higher wages, better qualified individuals enjoy improved employment prospects and an increased likelihood of receiving workplace training. They are more likely to get promoted and undertake further learning in the future….The wide-ranging benefits at the individual level translate into gains for employers and the country as a whole. (DfES, 2007, p. 12)

Therefore, when young people remain in education longer, they can contribute more to the enhancement of human capital at an individual and collective level. Economic benefits for vocational students cover better wages and career prospects. Social benefits are intertwined with the promotion of social cohesion: "The world continues to change, to become more diverse, complex and interdependent: a cohesive society depends upon making sure that all young people have the attitudes and skills to benefit from diversity and change" (DfES, 2007, p. 9).

In this context, vocational education is attributed a key role in re-engaging young people who are not participating in education, training or employment. Policy provisions are made for the delivery of "much more applied and practical learning to appeal to those not engaged by the current curriculum" (DfES, 2007, p. 15). The opportunity for applied and practical learning is therefore anticipated to encourage young people to pursue and complete further studies; in particular, those young people who may not feel included in academic education. A society will remain cohesive when "the young people least likely to continue in education or training and those perhaps with the most to gain" (p. 18) do so. The latter would be young people who behave in a less sociable manner; vocational education would offer them time and skills to develop a more constructive attitude towards life.

The *desirable* to achieve in a society in the wake of the economic crisis is to encourage young people to remain longer in education, in order to use their qualifications to enhance their earnings and career prospects, become lifelong learners and contribute to economic competitiveness. Vocational education emerges as an inclusive and welcoming learning environment particularly for those who may not feel included in academic education. It would thus provide them with the skills they need to get included in society and support its cohesiveness.

The 2011 *Wolf Review of Vocational Education – Government Response* focusses entirely on secondary vocational education, including apprenticeships. Perceived lack of clear progression routes to employment or higher education in 2005 continues to be a policy issue in 2011. This is reflected in the argument that "the current system of vocational education is failing too many young people" because there are vocational qualifications "which offer no route to further education nor entry into employment for those still in education" (DfE, 2011, p. 2). Past concerns about changes in the economy and society worldwide make way for concerns about changes occurring in the labour market and working life nationwide. Policy-makers point to the need to deliver study programmes which will provide vocational students with qualifications to address a changing economy and labour market throughout their life:

> Undertaking a coherent and well considered study programme is vital to ensuring their education has the breadth, as well as the depth, to enable them to respond to changes in the jobs market and in their careers over their lifetime. (DfE, 2011, p. 6)

Preparation for changes in working life emerges as an integral part of vocational education and points to the direction of lifelong learning: young people would need to update and enrich their knowledge and skills, in order to respond to changes over their lifetime.

In contrast to Greece, the topic of *transformation* underpins the English policy documents under study. To give an example, policy-makers argue that "establishing routes which are really tailored to young people depends on a transformation of opportunity in vocational education" (DfES, 2005, p. 45). This statement could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it ascertains that vocational education has not offered the same opportunities with academic education. On the other hand, it illuminates the policy perception of (vocational) education as a tool for empowering young people to change their life. Similarly, the 2011 policy paper promises to "transform the lives of young people" (DfE, 2011, p. 3) through the reform measures proposed. This appears to be in conjunction with the wider policy context and the association of social justice with the act of "providing support and tools to transform lives" (DWP, 2012, p. 5). What is meant by support in the context of vocational education will be explored further below.

The *desirable* to achieve in a society in economic recession is to raise awareness of the perceived benefits from vocational education. In this light, there are policy attempts to ensure that the learning objectives for vocational education turn into tangible outcomes: a qualification or a job title. Concerns about global competitiveness give way to concerns about economic sustainability and growth at a national level. In contrast to Greece, a recurring theme in the discourse of (vocational) education is transformation through learning, which is associated with the promotion of social justice through (vocational) education.

In the English policy context, the term *technical* finds a new place in the discourse of vocational education and the 2011 response, to introduce the proposed institution of university technical colleges. Fuller and Unwin (2011) underline the fact that the term *technical education* reappears in policy discourse and express scepticism about the policy direction for vocational education. The proposed direction appears to tilt away from the promotion of a broader approach to education towards the implementation of a more specific, hence more limited approach. Change to terminology in both the Greek and the English policy context reveals change to policy direction and encompasses some uncertainty about the direction of vocational education in contemporary society.

Next, I will explore in some detail the connection between my findings from both cases and the theories of human capital and social capital.

5.3.3 The development of human and social capital through vocational education

As discussed in Chapter 2, **human capital development** through vocational education requires the implementation of study programmes with a specific aim and outcome, and the development of economic behaviour which can yield economic and non-economic outcomes for both the individual and the production system (Grubb & Ryan, 1999). The policy direction for vocational education in both Greece and England favours the development of human capital at an individual and national level on the one hand, and highlights the importance policy-makers place on vocational provision in social cohesion on the other. Vocational students as individuals would acquire and enhance knowledge and skills suitable for employment by attending vocational schools in Greece or pursuing specialised study programmes and courses in England. During their vocational studies, they would develop attitudes and behaviour to enable them to adapt to labour market needs and changes throughout their life. This policy expectation points to the direction of lifelong learning for employment. In both countries under study, the learning objectives include vocational preparation which corresponds to sectors of the economy on the one hand, and facilitates participation in higher education on the other. Widening participation in higher education is considered a means of promoting equal access to life opportunities. This policy initiative is in line with the Maastricht Communiqué (European Commission, 2004) and the call for strengthening the link between VET and higher education in Europe. For the more sceptical, in times of economic crisis, this may be a policy initiative to protect young people from unemployment by postponing the process of seeking employment.

Greece and England share an ongoing policy problem: low participation among upper secondary students in vocational education. As Fairclough (2003) points out, the problem-solution pattern dominates policy discourse. Drawing upon Prunty (1985) about the ideal in policy making, it becomes evident that low participation in vocational education is viewed by policy-makers as a barrier to human capital development. Having this matter resolved would lead to a social ideal with two components. On the one hand, young people who may not perform well academically will accrue suitable qualifications to get included in the labour market and find employment relevant to their studies. In this way, the state and individual investment in vocational education will be considered fruitful. On the other hand, they will invest their qualifications in the

economic growth of the labour market and the economic competitiveness of the country; this is understood to be the main economic outcome for the production system. If in England, there is policy belief in the power of the individual to change and succeed in their life through (vocational) education and hard work, in Greece, policy belief in the role of (vocational) education and the individual in change gives way to the policy realisation that individual change needs collective support. In England, the policy belief in the transforming power of (vocational) education is persistent even in times of economic crisis, and openly embraces young people who may feel excluded from academic education.

Along the same lines with Becker (1993), in England, the main economic outcome for the individual student who invests time and effort in further studies is better wages and career prospects. It appears that policy belief in this investment has not been challenged by the recession. In contrast to England, in Greece and in times of economic austerity and rising youth unemployment, a change in the process of becoming employed through vocational education can be discerned. Having "more and better employment opportunities" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 16) is changing into encountering "fewer difficulties in finding employment" (MoERA, 2013, p. 4). In other words, the conception of *getting a job* is expanding to include fewer employment difficulties. Pouliakas (2014) clarifies that such difficulties in Greece may increase for vocational school leavers when they compete with university graduates for the same job: university degree holders tend to be favoured by employers even for jobs which do not require a higher level of skills.

The non-economic outcomes for vocational students concern their social behaviour and, by extension, their interaction with others. Though they tend to be considered part of human capital development, I will argue that there are some implications for **social capital development** as well. The starting point will be to view social capital as the accrual of qualifications and traits which individuals bring together to form and maintain social networks (see Coleman, 1988). In this light, preparation for employment and inclusion in the labour market may imply preparation for social capital development and inclusion in a society. In the case of Greece, social capital development may be achieved when vocational students secure employment and social inclusion which would then stimulate acceptance by others and the creation of social ties (by avoiding exclusion and marginalisation). In the case of England, this may be accomplished when young people are provided with the educational opportunity to avoid dead ends (leading to social exclusion), and to develop more harmonious and less

anti-social behaviour. A more harmonious interaction with others would then bring some positive change to their relationships. Drawing upon Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995, 2000), employment is the social norm which young people need to follow, in order to be included in the economy and society that surrounds them. In times of economic crisis, demonstrating potential for employment may be the first step to both human capital and social capital development.

Possible tensions between human capital and social capital are unveiled in the Greek policy context and the identification of complex needs in the field of vocational education. Such tensions may be perceived as social cohesion challenges. These challenges are illustrated in the statement that vocational education may serve "conflicting and contradictory needs" (MoERA, 2013, p. 4) of interested parties. Lack of common goals or common expectations may hinder reciprocity, an integral element of social capital and, by extension, social cohesion. What is then missing from the discourse of vocational education, as articulated in the selected policy documents, is the policy vision for the promotion of reciprocity and hence the creation of social ties. Though there are clear links established among vocational education, employment and economic growth, it is not clear how young people could achieve personal social growth and development through vocational education. In the English policy context, there are references to the importance of achieving wellbeing and fulfilment in life. This feeling appears to be attributed to individual work and effort rather than social ties. In times of economic crisis, building social ties and networks in their own right may be equally as important as preparation for employment.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, the policy direction for vocational education is targeted at achieving economic security for the individual student and the society that surrounds them. Vocational education would support its students to enhance their human capital by accumulating qualifications which will enable them to get included in the labour market and, in turn, invest their human capital in the economic growth and competitiveness of the labour market and the country. Widening participation in higher education forms part of the policy initiatives to provide vocational students with equal access to life opportunities. In the English policy context, (vocational) education emerges as a human entity that has the power to transform lives and hence assist young people to improve their life through education and learning. Policy belief in the power of the individual to find their place in life on the back of their qualifications remains strong throughout the period of time under study. In the Greek policy context, such a belief is challenged by the economic austerity. There is steady

policy belief that vocational education can facilitate its students to find their place in life by accessing employment opportunities and avoiding exclusion and marginalisation. Following the enactment of the second memorandum, it is acknowledged that the policy problem of youth unemployment calls for the enactment of policies related to other fields of interest. What is missing from the discourser of vocational education is the policy vision for social capital development on the basis of social ties.

5.4 Linguistic and social construction of vocational students in text

I will now look into how vocational students are linguistically and socially represented in the discourse of vocational education in Greece and England. This will shed some light on how their student identity is shaped and what the motivation for vocational education is. The discussion will revolve around the topic of *heterogeneity* as associated with diversity. I will focus on heterogeneity because in the EU policy context, vocational education is described as an inclusive and heterogeneous learning environment, which triggers issues of concern related to conceptions of *social cohesion* (Cedefop, 2013; European Commission, 2011).

In the **Greek** policy context, vocational students emerge as part of the vocational education system. Those who participate in vocational education are mainly classified in terms of the stage they are in. The term *students* (*mathites*)[31] is used in statements about the process of being educated and qualified. The term *leavers* (*apofoitoi*) is used to denote progression to work and social life. In 2011, the term *young people* (*oi neoi*) is introduced to generically refer to vocational students. This change in discourse may be associated with the change of political party in government and policy attempts to raise attractiveness of vocational education: it targets all young people.

Vocational students and leavers may appear as the agent or recipient of an action related to their education. Students as agents have certain responsibilities and rights: "Students are obliged to attend common courses and all the courses in the cycle they choose" (MoERA, 2006, p. 23). To progress to the next year of study, they have to achieve specific assessment criteria: "When a student does not meet the prerequisite…, he repeats the school year" (MoERA, 2013, p. 70). They are expected to take ownership of their learning: "Students will have the opportunity to choose programmes and educational pathways, for the fulfilment of their professional goals" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 12). Similarly, school leavers as agents have certain rights and benefits, such as the

---

[31] The masculine gender is used generically to refer to both the male (*mathites*) and female gender (*mathitries*).

right "to obtain licence to practise in an occupation, in accordance with the provisions in force" (MoERA, 2006, p. 24).

Their social identity is delineated by reasons for choosing vocational education. These may be intrinsic, thus addressing inner needs and wishes, or extrinsic, with students responding to the needs of the society that surrounds them. Generally, it is assumed that young people pursue vocational studies because their learning needs are different from those served by academic education. Policy-makers advocate the operation of a vocational school "which responds to the diversity of students, their different wishes and capabilities..., opposed to any form of marginalisation and exclusion" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 13). Different wishes would refer to interests, talents, inclinations or skills resulting in different learning needs. These would be supported through the delivery of a wide range of specialties in vocational schools. Along with intrinsic motivation, students usually of a certain age may respond to extrinsic motivation and the need to "choose their specialty based on the employment opportunities it offers them" (p. 7).

Diversity implies that there are students who may have learning difficulties or personal problems. It is stressed that vocational education is usually followed by students "with weak performance and achievement" and "several students with learning gaps as well as family or financial problems" (MoERA, 2006, p. 1). Policy-makers acknowledge that vocational education bears "the responsibility for academic failure [*scholiki apotychia*] and early school leaving towards unskilled unemployment" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 13), and highlight the need for vocational teachers "to help their students fill knowledge gaps and enhance their self-esteem" (p. 15). There is a perceived link between (formal) school knowledge and self-esteem, that is, the way individuals value themselves. It is inferred that the higher the level of knowledge is, the higher the level of self-esteem will be. Vocational students who have lower levels of knowledge are expected to lack self-esteem. The way they interact with their teachers emerges to be central to their learning and personal development. Reflecting on Ecclestone and her study on self-esteem, Colley, Chadderton and Nixon (2014) sound sceptical about the projected relation between education and self-esteem. They underline that in the pursuit of self-esteem and empowerment through knowledge, learners may become more vulnerable and hence less confident in themselves. This means that they learn to value themselves in terms of what they know rather than who they are as a person. As mentioned in Chapter 4, "we can never know everything"

(Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 220); therefore, there will be a 'gap' in self-esteem based on knowledge.

In the **English** policy context, vocational students are not classified in terms of their learning pathway.[32] Rather, they are represented as members mainly of the group of young people and sometimes of students, both generically and personally. The term *young people* (or *young person*) is generally used in statements about progression into the world of adults: "the learning young people are doing must be valuable as a preparation for life" (DfES, 2007, p. 19). The term thus delineates the scope of responsibility: they are not children who need guidance or adults who need to take full responsibility for their life. The term *students* refers to young people already engaged in education and learning. This is reflected in statements which, for instance, underline the need for "schools and colleges to provide continuing support to [post-16] students to help them reach at least level 2 functional English and maths" (DfES, 2005, p. 39).

Vocational students are in a linguistic position to be affected by or benefit from the education system. They would benefit from the development of "an engaging education system, more tailored to the talents and aptitudes of young people" (DfES, 2005, p. 44). In contrast, they would be affected by a vocational education system perceived to be "failing too many young people" (DfE, 2011, p. 2). As agents of action, they would take ownership of their learning as well: take courses and qualifications; study and gain work experience; achieve or fail. These points are encapsulated in the following quotation: "Young people themselves know very well that their future depends upon their education and the skills they can acquire" (DfES, 2007, p. 10). The term *young people* may signify wider expectations for upper secondary students in general: they are expected to take on responsibility for their future.

In comparison with Greece, the social identity is similarly determined by motivation for vocational education, mainly defined against the identity of academic students. If the latter are "those who are engaged and motivated by conceptual study" (DfES, 2005, p. 23), the former are "those who prefer to learn in a different way" (p. 19). It is assumed that vocational students wish to develop knowledge and skills "with an obvious relevance and application to the wider world" (p. 23). Relevance may refer to labour market needs in skills, thus implying that motivation is associated with future career goals. It is stressed that the Diploma programmes would be launched to support students "who want to keep their options open through taking an educational

---

[32] In the executive summary of the Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011), the term *vocational students* is used explicitly to refer to young people following vocational study programmes.

programme rather than training for a specific occupation" (DfES, 2007, p. 25). It is considered important for vocational teachers to have experience of the workplace, in order to share it with their students. When discussing the example of catering courses, policy-makers suggest that teachers "have real workplace experience and expertise as well as teaching skills" (DfES, 2005, p. 55).

Vocational education would respond to the diverse learning needs of vocational students and assume a key role in re-engaging young people disengaged from education, training or employment. Among them, there may be "those who are not motivated by the school experience," or whose "serious personal problems stand in the way of their educational success," or "those with learning difficulties" (DfES, 2005, pp. 67, 69, 70). Those who may not possess academic skills essential for progression in education or employment are considered the most vulnerable: "the most vulnerable young people who are not able to progress directly to achieve GCSE level qualifications by age 16" (DfE, 2011, p. 7).

Findings from the Greek and the English part of the documentary analysis indicate that generally, there is a degree of heterogeneity among vocational students in terms of learning needs and future goals. In both Greece and England, vocational students are projected as young people with diverse talents, skills, inclinations and aptitudes; these are perceived to be different from those developed by students following the academic pathway. What seems to bring students together is the perceived wish to acquire knowledge and skills relevant and applicable to life outside school (or college). As learners, they are expected to demonstrate a sense of responsibility which is required to obtain their licence to practise or secure immediate employment. In Greece, emphasis is placed on raising the level of knowledge, viewed as a means of enhancing students' self-esteem and subsequently life chances. Responsibility for the outcome is shared between students and their teachers. In England, students are expected to assume full responsibility for their progression into the world of adults. It is taken for granted that they view education as an investment leading to human capital investment and hence labour market inclusion. Teachers would support them to achieve professional readiness.

Vocational education is portrayed as a learning environment which can accommodate the needs and goals of a fairly heterogeneous group of young people. Heterogeneity emerges as an issue of concern at a European and national level. In the EU policy context, the diversity of study programmes and learning needs raises concern as to how feasible it is to ensure that young people complete their studies: "this very

variety and greater inclusiveness of VET – which, unlike general education, includes programmes open to low performers – is also what makes dropout more likely" (Cedefop, 2013, p. 2). A similar concern is explicitly articulated in the Greek policy context when policy-makers affirm that vocational education is widely considered responsible for student dropout (MoELLRA, 2011). Concerns about heterogeneity and diversity indicate that vocational education may not be expected to promote the development of social capital. As mentioned earlier, the school in its broader sense is viewed as a formal social network which supports learning through relationships and reciprocity (Coleman, 1988; Dewey, 1916/1966; Putnam, 2000). In such a network, members share space, time and interests to create common grounds and social ties. In a learning environment considered diverse and heterogeneous, creating social bonds is projected by policy-makers as a challenging process. The policy challenge may then be to identify and propose ways of addressing barriers to social capital development.

5.5 Main assumptions and arguments about vocational education

I will explore key issues in the policy direction for vocational education which I have identified in the policy documents under study. These concern main assumptions and arguments about vocational education in Greece and England and address the two set research questions. The discussion will move towards a more detailed depiction of vocational education. Selected themes cut across the selected policy documents and recur within the context of the Copenhagen Process. Though they are of common interest to both Greece and England, cultural differences to aspects of these themes can be discerned. The key issues are the following: (a) maintaining the vocational tradition; (b) vocational education as a second chance in education; (c) vocational education as a means of securing employment; (d) promoting parity of esteem for vocational education. The fourth issue addresses both research questions and offers some insight into the link of vocational education to the labour market and society. These issues are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the envisaged relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis.

5.5.1 Maintaining the vocational tradition

It becomes obvious from the documentary analysis that there is policy interest in maintaining the vocational tradition in Greece and England. This tradition has influenced the policy direction for vocational education in times of economic crisis. Regardless of policy attempts to integrate academic and vocational learning into

vocational education, the direction tilts towards the enhancement of practical utility and personal effectiveness (see Pring, 2007). The Copenhagen Process acknowledges the historical divide between academic education and vocational education in the call for initiatives "to reduce barriers between VET and general education" (European Commission, 2004, p. 3). At the same time, it implies the need to maintain two separate learning pathways and subsequently two separate curriculums.

In the **Greek** policy context, interest in maintaining the vocational tradition is reflected in the description of the curriculum. The learning content is organised into grades (years of study), cycles of study and learning sectors which correspond to economic sectors and embody a wide range of specialties. The study programme generally encompasses academic courses and introductory and specialised courses in sectors and specialties; the latter combine theoretical knowledge and workshop activities. Vocational schools organise "additional support to Modern Greek and Mathematics" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 22) where required. Literacy and numeracy skills are associated with wider social learning. In 2011, policy-makers imply that the way individuals interact with each other (as an aspect of social learning) "is not related to their technical – vocational knowledge and skills, but forms an integral part of wider education which should be offered to students, regardless of the type of lyceum they choose" (p. 4). This statement acknowledges the limited roles traditionally ascribed to vocational education. The learning content confirms policy interest in maintaining the vocational tradition and strengthening its relation to the labour market.

Academic education and vocational education are both envisaged to prepare young people for employment; the difference lies in the degree of specificity. If academic education aims at developing "skills which will facilitate access to the labour market" (MoERA, 2013, p. 64), vocational education aims to provide "comprehensive vocational knowledge and skills for access to the labour market" (p. 68). A shift in balance between academic and vocational learning can be discerned. In 2006, policy interest tilts towards enhancing academic learning with the main argument that it contributes to "the all-round growth and development of the individual" (MoERA, 2006, p. 1). Following the enactment of the first memorandum, interest lies in specialised vocational learning, as reflected in the concern about the perceived "dramatic reduction in the instructional hours of specialised courses" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 9).

In the **English** policy context, the policy intention to maintain the vocational tradition is similarly manifested in the description of the curriculum. The difference is

that in Greece there is a national curriculum, whilst in England there are state guidelines for the development of the college curriculum. The learning content encompasses practical or work-related learning as opposed to abstract or theoretical learning attributed to academic study. Study programmes generally aim to offer students the opportunity to specialise in a vocational area, develop wider employability skills and improve generic (academic) skills which can be applied to the field of employment. When policy-makers discuss support for low attaining students, they argue that upper secondary programmes "need to support students to achieve English and maths, and incorporate valuable work experience" (DfE, 2011, p. 7). It is clarified, however, that "16-19 year old students pursuing **full time** courses of study should not follow a programme which is entirely 'occupational'" (p. 17; in bold, underlined and quotation marks in original). In other words, vocational education should retain but not be limited to the primary purpose to offer preparation for specialised and immediate employment.

In comparison with Greece, a shift in balance between academic and vocational learning can be similarly observed. The Diploma programmes would support a wider approach to vocational education: "The Diplomas will give young people a fully rounded education through a mix of theoretical and applied learning, enabling them to develop skills and underpinning knowledge in a work-related context" (DfES, 2007, p. 24). They stimulate the development of a new and different direction for vocational education. In 2011, the abolition of the Diploma programmes gives way to the proposal for the establishment of university technical colleges in partnership with employers, which aim to offer more specialised vocational learning in distinct educational institutions. It becomes obvious that the policy direction tilts towards the enhancement of specialised preparation targeted at the division of labour. This is associated with the policy concern that "technical education remains weaker than most other developed nations" (Wolf, 2011, p. 4). This statement is reiterated in the 2011 government response.

The Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 2004) recommendation which introduced a more unified approach to education and learning at secondary level through the Diploma programme initiative was not accepted by policy-makers; however, it "drew nationwide attention to the divisive and inadequate nature of current arrangements" (Huddleston & Unwin, 2007, p. 55). The divisive nature of upper secondary education emerges as a long-standing concern in Greece as well: interested parties entertain the idea of a comprehensive education system to reach the conclusion that the process of turning that idea into action is challenging (Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education, 2009). The

promotion of a comprehensive system is interpreted as a challenge to educational and social stability. Given that formal education prepares young people for the world of adults, changes to the structure and philosophy of secondary education are assumed to have a knock-on effect in other aspects of life. Initiatives such as the Tomlinson recommendation on a unified framework of qualifications indicate willingness to bridge the divide between academic education and vocational education. The observation that the act of bridging is challenging implies that the divide is (still) big. In times of economic crisis, where policy emphasis is placed on strengthening the relation between vocational education and the labour market, the division between academic education and vocational education may become bigger.

The reason for the shift in balance between academic and vocational learning appears to be twofold. On the one hand, it can be attributed to change of government and subsequent change of perspective on (vocational) education. The government of New Democracy in Greece (in 2006) and the Labour Party in England (in 2005) express interest in enhanced academic learning within vocational education. In contrast, the government of PASOK in Greece (in 2011) and the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in England (in 2011) consider the enhancement of specialised vocational learning. On the other hand, this shift can highlight the envisaged interrelation of vocational education and the economy in contemporary society. The more academic initiatives are introduced before the economic crisis. In contrast, enhanced vocational learning is promoted following the austerity crisis in Greece and the recovery process in England, with policy-makers promoting a more utilitarian direction for vocational education.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, it is obvious from the findings that there is policy intention to maintain the vocational tradition. In the knowledge-based economy and society, the tradition is developed on the basis of policy attempts to integrate academic and vocational learning into vocational education. Vocational learning would be specific enough to prepare for employment relevant to the area of study and broad enough to facilitate inclusion in the labour market; the latter becomes more evident in England. Academic learning is associated with generic skills transferable to the field of employment in England, and the social aspect of learning in Greece. The latter approach to learning points to the creation of social capital in the context of social interaction and supports the assumption that vocational learning may not contribute to social capital development in its own right. The impact of the economic crisis is reflected in the change of focus in the policy direction for vocational

education: from the promotion of a balance between academic and vocational learning to the strengthening of specialised vocational learning. The economic crisis emerges as the turning point in the policy direction for vocational education at a national as well as European level.

5.5.2 Vocational education as a second chance in education

Findings from the documentary analysis indicate that vocational education is viewed as a second chance in education and work in Greece and England, thus expected to contribute to the promotion of social justice in Greece and England. This is reflected in the portrayal of vocational education as an alternative chance to get educated and qualified for life. Young people who are not considered academic are provided with alternative learning options and qualifications. The Copenhagen Process recognises the compensatory role of VET in fostering social cohesion when it proposes that "VET should offer individualised career paths in order to integrate those who have left their studies or training prematurely, and those outside the mainstream of society" (European Commission, 2008, p. 5), regardless of age.

In the **Greek** policy context, vocational education offers non-academic young people the chance to get educated at upper secondary level and hence qualified for the labour market. When discussing the proposed role of the technological lyceum, policy-makers state:

> It cannot be only a school which will educate future professionals, but also it should be an alternative [*enallaktiki*] educational pathway in upper secondary education, for those students who want a different type of school, where they could develop their special inclinations and skills. (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 7)

The purpose of the vocational school is justified by the assumption that there are students who do not wish to follow the academic pathway. Rather, they wish to have their learning needs met in an alternative learning environment such as vocational education. Vocational education can offer them a second chance to remain in education, explore their potential and get qualified for the labour market. Alternative then signifies a different way to access opportunities traditionally developed in the context of academic education, including access to higher education. This is consistent with education policy initiatives to promote vocational education at upper secondary level as an *alternative* opportunity to pursue further studies.

In comparison with Greece, in the **English** policy context, vocational education is similarly expected to provide non-academic young people with the chance to pursue further studies and obtain relevant qualifications. When presenting the aims of the 2005 reform programme, policy-makers point out:

> Our reforms will create opportunities for all young people. For many, the curriculum choices introduced in this White Paper will provide the opportunities they need to develop their talents and so succeed. The vocational opportunities, including different styles and places of learning, will motivate many. (DfES, 2005, p. 7)

It is assumed that there are young people who are not interested in academic education. The opportunity to pursue vocational studies is expected to motivate them to remain in education and prepare for the world of adults. Vocational education can offer them an engaging learning environment to develop their talents, obtain "post-16 alternatives to GCSEs and A levels in schools and colleges" (DfES, 2005, p. 19), and succeed in life. This implies that vocational education is perceived as an alternative way of getting educated and qualified at upper secondary level. This is supported by the wider policy attempt to establish "vocational education as a viable alternative to more academic routes" (NFER, 2014, p. 3).

It becomes obvious from the findings that vocational education in Greece and England is projected as an alternative option to academic education.[33] The question arises as to whether the term *alternative* is used in the discourse of vocational education as a euphemism. According to van Dijk (2006), euphemisms form a rhetorical tool in political discourse and, by extension, policy discourse. This tool would be used to avoid acknowledging negative assumptions or negative facts about issues considered challenging. The use of alternative may then be understood to capture the policy awareness of negative facts about vocational education: compared to academic education, it is a different way of reaching similar but not the same learning outcomes. Vocational students may get qualified and then get a job and get promoted, yet the return on investment in vocational education may not yield the same benefits from academic education. Vocational education is envisaged to assist students in exploring their potential and discovering their value as an individual learner; however, this does not necessarily lead to outcomes traditionally achieved through academic education.

---

[33] In the English policy context, academic education is associated with mainstream education (see DfE, 2005; DCSF, 2007), which refers to culture-specific "main conventions of publicly funded school education as generally understood in Western countries" (Woods & Woods, 2009, p. 3).

Alternative education has fundamentally been associated with progressive education (Woods & Woods, 2009). This association supports the need of young people to be educated for democracy and to use that learning towards social change and order through their interaction with "the different forms of associated life" (Dewey, 1916/1966, p. 99). In times of economic crisis, one may wonder whether there could be a role for vocational education in the promotion of social change and order. Given that there is a direct link between vocational education and the economy (through inclusion in the labour market), vocational students could use their education and qualifications to understand the impact of the economic crisis on everyday life. That awareness would enable them to engage in action which could contribute to the improvement of the current state of affairs (change) and support feelings of security and stability (order).

The question of what alternative means encourages reflection on the meaning of adaptability of learning needs. In her study on the differentiation of the curriculum into academic and vocational in selected schools in the USA, Oakes (2005) proposes that schools should "change the character of the academic curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse student population" (p. 152) instead of offering vocational learning opportunities. Rather than encouraging young people to adapt to the learning opportunities available within formal education, policy-makers should adapt the character of the formal, mainstream curriculum to the needs of young people. Such form of adaptation may enhance the feeling of (learning needs) being validated, and facilitate the process of learning for democracy and using that learning to intervene into the economic and subsequent social crisis. Individual needs may then turn into collective goals, and human capital development may support the development of social capital.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, vocational education generally emerges as a second chance for non-academic young people to get educated and qualified for the labour market. It is assumed by policy-makers that there are young people who do not wish to follow the academic pathway to the life of adults and need a different learning environment to develop their inclinations, skills and talents. Vocational education would enable them to remain in education, enhance their human capital, use it to enter the labour market and achieve success in life. Academic education serves as a point of reference in defining vocational education as an alternative chance. The attributive adjective *alternative* may be used as a euphemism to draw attention away from the fact that benefits from vocational education are not necessarily the same as those from academic education. On the other side, it encourages reflection on the potential link between progressive education and vocational education, as perceived by

Dewey (1916/1966): a tool for democracy, social change and order. The policy challenge would then be to explicate the use of *alternative* in the discourse of vocational education.

5.5.3 Vocational education as a means of securing employment

In the Greek and English policy context, it becomes obvious that vocational education is perceived as a means of securing employment. Labour market relevance of vocational education is promoted as a secure means of human capital development at individual and collective level. In the context of the Copenhagen Process, VET is envisaged to equip vocational learners to meet the needs of the labour market and become employable (European Commission, 2011). Labour market relevance is supported in a policy attempt to combat youth unemployment on the one hand, and secure productivity and economic growth on the other.

In the **Greek** policy context, vocational students are envisaged to enhance employability by choosing a vocational specialty relevant to the labour market needs. This is inferred from the statement about the operation of a former type of vocational school: "The many specialties they offered did not respond to the actual needs of the labour market" (MoERA, 2006, p. 1). Relevance of vocational education to the labour market is widely expected to address unemployment and contribute to local development: "Students, teachers and parents point out that the link…to the labour market will be vital to tackling the problem of unemployment, as well as to the development of local communities" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 7).

The degree of relevance changes during the period of time under study. In 2006, policy-makers underline the importance of enabling students to acquire "professional competence in a particular job rather than specialisation" (MoERA, 2006, p. 1), in order to develop adaptability to the labour market. In 2011, a more specialised preparation for employment is proposed, leading to the qualification of "medium-level technicians and professionals" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 20). The proposal is supported with the argument that "jobs with low level of qualification are being limited" (p. 9). If professional competence was advocated prior to the economic crisis, a more targeted policy direction is promoted in the wake of the crisis. Furthermore, the position of vocational leavers in the labour market is specified: medium level. Confidence of policy-makers in the role of vocational education in employment is reflected in the assumption that it can meet skills shortages. A fourth year of studies is proposed in response to "the need to match

knowledge and skills delivered in Technical – Vocational Education with the need of the labour market, as well as the need for medium-level skilled employees" (p. 18).

In the **English** policy context, labour market relevance is articulated with youth employment and associated with economic growth:

> Vocational education is a vital underpinning for our economy. The development of young people's skills in areas of immediate relevance to employers and business is a central part of the Government's plans to boost economic growth, and to support higher levels of youth employment. (DfE, 2011, p. 1)

Policy-makers affirm a positive role for vocational education in economic growth and promote a more utilitarian direction for education policy: the delivery of skills which have immediate relevance for productivity and the labour market. The verbs *boost* and *support* denote recognition of the relation between employment and economic growth: the path to economic flourishing can lead to higher levels of employment. Meeting skills shortages emerges as one way of enhancing human capital development.

In contrast to Greece, employers in England are ascribed a more prominent role in the discourse of vocational education. Policy-makers express their intention to actively engage them in the organisation and delivery of vocational courses, in order to secure labour market relevance of vocational education. This becomes evident in the case of the Diploma programmes: "we intend to put employers in the driving seat, so that they will have a key role in determining what the 'lines of learning' should be and in deciding in detail what the Diplomas should contain" (DfES, 2005, p. 47). The centrality of employers is emphasised by the argument that "for many young people, real contact with real employers is an important motivation" (p. 55); vocational education is obviously perceived as a secure means of entering the world of work defined as the real world. This centrality is in line with the Maastricht Communiqué and the call for "increased relevance and quality of VET through the systematic involvement of all key partners" (European Commission, 2004, p. 3), including employers.

It becomes obvious that in times of economic recovery, a closer link between vocational education and employers is projected as a contributing factor to economic flourishing and the creation of more jobs. Closer collaboration with employers would encourage young people to remain in education, get skilled for the labour market and identify opportunities to invest their capital locally. In times of economic austerity, the delivery of vocational specialties relevant to local community needs is perceived as a

means of creating employment opportunities for young people. Such perceptions may unveil concerns about work mobility: in the case that young people are not able to get a job locally, they would probably decide to move where they are able to get employed. Therefore, they would not return the investment in their education locally.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, there is common policy interest in promoting vocational education as a means of securing employment. Vocational education would therefore equip its students with (knowledge and) skills which are relevant to employment and the labour market on the one hand, and useful for productivity and economic growth on the other. In this light, vocational education is ascribed a key role in human capital development at an individual and collective level, with individual and collective success understood to support social cohesion. Drawing upon Iannelli and Raffe (2007), vocational education in Greece appears to be closer to the educational logic and the development of professional competence rather than specialisation explicitly required by employers. This is associated with the wider importance placed on (higher) academic education and a less industrialised nature of the national economy. On the other side, vocational education in England would tilt towards the employment logic and strengthening collaboration with employers throughout the period of time under study. This is intertwined with a more industrialised nature of the national economy and the importance placed on employment in social cohesion.

5.5.4 Promoting parity of esteem for vocational education

The notion of *parity of esteem* finds its place in the discourse of vocational education in both Greece and England; directly in the case of England and indirectly in the case of Greece through the use of the term *equivalent*. It is acknowledged that vocational education is widely valued as second choice or second class in the case of England. Establishing vocational education as the first choice among young people is a matter of common concern. Lack of parity of esteem is acknowledged in the context of the Copenhagen Process: "the parity of esteem and links between VET and general education, in particular with higher education, need to be fostered by innovative strategies and instruments at the national and European levels" (European Commission, 2004, p. 2).

In the **Greek** policy context, it is emphasised that, "The school leaving certificates [*apolytiria*] of Vocational Lyceums are equivalent to the school leaving certificates of General Lyceums" (MoERA, 2006, p. 24). Though equivalence of

certificates is established at a policy level, anticipated to lead to equivalent opportunities in life, vocational education is not widely considered an attractive choice for education and schooling. The main points are encapsulated in the following statement: "The fundamental goal for Technical – Vocational Education is: **To establish the 'vocational school' as a first choice school**, able to secure for its graduate social development [*koinoniki kataksiosi*], stable work and career progression" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 4; quotation marks and in bold in original). This statement implies that the benefits from vocational education are not the same as those from academic education: not much has changed. What is missing from vocational education relates to issues of economic and social status in life. These benefits are assumed to be integral elements of the goal of social cohesion. The academic school is widely regarded the first choice, with the vocational school being the second choice. The use of bold letters denotes the intention of policy-makers to change the direction of schooling, from general to vocational.

In the **English** policy context, it is explicitly articulated that vocational education is not equally appealing to or valued by society, including the student population. The term *second choice* is used in conjunction with *second class* to refer to wider assumptions about vocational education against academic education. It is acknowledged that there is "an attitude that vocational education is a second choice, easy option for the less able" (DfE, 2011, p. 2). It is thus assumed that young people who may not perform well academically would choose vocational education because they consider it an easy option for further studies. To challenge such assumptions, the need to turn vocational education into a conscious decision is highlighted in the policy discourse: "We need to make it a real choice for all young people to pursue vocational courses, not something which is seen as a second-class route for those who cannot succeed on academic courses" (DfES, 2005, p. 45). In this light, it is affirmed that vocational education leads to qualifications which offer young people opportunities shared with academic education to progress in life:

> Just as much as academic education, vocational learning provides invaluable opportunities for young people to develop their potential and expand what they know, understand and can do; and to gain recognition for that learning which allows them to progress as they move to adulthood. (DfE, 2011, p. 1)

Throughout the period of time under study there are policy concerns about the wider assumptions about vocational education being second choice or second class

education. Atkins and Flint (2015) draw attention to the issue of social class in the United Kingdom:

> Social class is a significant issue in the UK context, since class hierarchies and cultures are deeply embedded throughout society and influence many aspects of life. It is a particular issue in the vocational context because educational outcome is closely associated with social class. (p. 36)

The policy call for equivalence between academic education and vocational education is thus interpreted as an attempt to address the issue of social class by raising the appeal and value of vocational education. Generally, social cohesion is envisaged to be strengthened through the provision of equal opportunities in life and the removal of barriers to success in life. The question arises as to how easy it could be to bring back together, in the world of adults, young people who have been separated into different education systems (academic versus vocational) leading to benefits associated with differences in status. If issues of status affect the way young people and society view opportunities available within formal education, then participation in vocational education may affect the way young people perceive themselves and relate to others. If satisfaction and fulfilment are components of social cohesion (see Chapter 1), then these values may be missing when young people progress into the world of adults. The underlying question is whether it suffices to propose reforms to vocational education, in order to safeguard parity of esteem. There is a line of argument which gives precedence to social changes over changes to vocational education. As it is indicated below, social changes include the way occupations associated with vocational education are widely valued and portrayed:

> Without enhancing the esteem associated with the range of occupations that are addressed within this field of education, efforts to enrich its purposes and processes will always be hampered by societal esteem that will work against parts of its provision and seek to position it as being marginal and less desirable than other fields of education. (Billet, 2011, p. 19)

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, the notion of *equivalence* or *parity of esteem* underpins the discourse of vocational education in both countries under study, a policy concern shared within the EU. There is shared concern about the low appeal of vocational education to society, including young people, as evidenced by wider

assumptions that it is second choice education targeted at those who do not perform well academically. In other words, it is targeted at young people who have not developed the required cultural capital for academic education. Drawing upon Bourdieu (1986) and his conception of cultural capital, perceived lack of equivalent status between academic education and vocational education indicates that vocational students may find it hard to use their vocational certificates to add value to the acquired capital. In the case of England, it is recognised that vocational education is regarded second class. This recognition points to culture-specific issues of concern: in contrast to Greece, issues of class trigger policy concern in England.

5.6 Concluding

Findings from the documentary analysis indicate the policy intention to justify the existence of the vocational tradition in Greece and England. Vocational students are generally projected as young people with diverse learning needs and future goals. It is assumed that these needs cannot be met in the context of academic education. Vocational education would then provide young people with a learning environment where they can explore their potential and raise their self-esteem in terms of knowledge and skills. Though vocational education emerges as an inclusive environment, at the same time, its diversity is viewed as a possible barrier to keeping learners together: some may still drop out.

It is obvious that in times of economic crisis, there is a greater policy need to highlight the significance of vocational education in economic security at an individual and collective level. With regards to individual students, enhancement of their human capital through vocational education is projected as a means of finding their place in the labour market and contributing to productivity. Policy initiatives to integrate academic and vocational learning into vocational education are discussed as an attempt to widen participation of vocational students in the labour market and society. The perceived low appeal of vocational education remains a shared concern throughout the period of time under study. The duration of the policy problem indicates that reforms to the provision of vocational education may not be sufficient to improve its image. As Billet (2011) implies, changes to structural factors may need to be implemented.

Drawing upon Iannelli and Raffe (2007), vocational education in Greece appears to be closer to the educational logic, with emphasis placed on the learning content. On the other side, vocational education in England would tilt towards the employment logic which calls for employers to assume a determining role in the organisation and delivery

of vocational education. The question arises as to whether it is the economic policy that determines the policy direction for (vocational) education or the other way round. In a less industrialised country like Greece, the educational logic is supported, whilst in a highly industrialised country like England, interest tilts towards the employment logic. In times of economic crisis, it would be of research interest to explore the relation between education policy and economic policy.

Chapter 6

Participant Teachers' Perceptions of the Relation between Vocational Education and the Labour Market in Greece and England

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have addressed the research question of how vocational education is envisaged by participant teachers in the interview study to support vocational students to find their place in the labour market in Greece and England. The purpose is to offer a more detailed indication of the contribution of vocational preparation to social cohesion in times of economic crisis. Findings show that participant teachers recognise various aspects of the relation between vocational education and the labour market, and subsequently of human capital development through vocational education. Generally, teachers who deliver the machinery-based courses consider vocational education an efficient means of developing human capital, ideally or in reality. They acknowledge the wider approach to vocational education promoted by policy-makers, which includes preparation targeted at a specific occupation yet broad enough to facilitate entry into the labour market. Those who deliver the human care courses perceive vocational education as a means of achieving a holistic preparation for life. This includes preparation for employment and other aspects of life. Teachers affirm that vocational students seek to enhance their human capital. They recognise three overlapping reasons for choosing vocational education: (a) to pursue a clear career goal; (b) to obtain formal qualifications they may not have been able to acquire through academic education; (c) to change their personal history. In this light, some teachers conceptualise vocational education as a means of promoting social justice by offering young people a second chance in education. Most teachers identify a direct link between vocational education and the labour market. Therefore, they view vocational education as a means of securing employment. Some of them express scepticism about the effectiveness of this link; these teachers are mainly based in Greece. I have followed a more technical logic in the presentation and discussion of my findings, in order to reflect the traditional technical nature of vocational education.

6.2 Vocational education as a tradition

Findings from the interview data indicate that participant teachers recognise and accept the historical divide between academic education and vocational education in both

Greece and England. Most teachers support the policy measures aimed at maintaining the vocational tradition within formal education. Some teachers suggest that vocational education can support students to achieve both personal and professional development, thus adopting a more inclusive approach to vocational education. Formal education in Europe has been traditionally divided into two broad learning pathways with distinct learning contents and outcomes: the academic (or general) and the vocational (European Commission, 2011). Since the launch of the Copenhagen Process in 2002, there have been systematic policy attempts to bridge the divide between the academic and the vocational tradition. The economic crisis may be contributing to the perpetuation of a distinct tradition.

6.2.1 Maintaining the vocational tradition

Nine teachers in **Greece** implicitly propose that the vocational tradition should be maintained. They describe vocational education as a structured learning pathway within formal education, which provides students with entry qualifications for the labour market. They acknowledge that it promotes the integration of what is perceived to be academic and vocational learning. Along with specialty-specific skills, students can enhance their social skills and develop behaviour suitable for the world of adults. Academic education emerges as a point of reference in defending the purpose of vocational education.

Teachers indicate that vocational students enhance their human capital by acquiring qualifications which provide them with an initial awareness of the workplace requirements. Fanis points out that vocational education is "part of the education system which aims for students [*paidia*] to acquire some basic skills…, in order to make their first step into the labour market". He clarifies that the next step could be continuous VET or higher vocational studies, thus supporting higher education eligibility of vocational students. Four teachers suggest that vocational education offers a more specialised preparation for the labour market, targeted at a particular occupation or industry and supplemented by a particular job title. Therefore, vocational students are prepared to find a particular place in the labour market. Minos defines vocational education as "that area of education which deals with trades and with technical specialties. In other words, it educates students to become technicians". Given that he delivers the more technically-based courses, his perception of the purpose of vocational preparation is more traditional. When Orestes refers to the subject matter he delivers, he points out that "it is adapted to the vocational specialty which each student can choose,

in order to provide him with qualifications for the subsequent professional career". What these four teachers share is the delivery of vocational courses which enable students to secure their professional rights.

Dimos advocates for vocational education when he states the following:

> First of all, there shouldn't be academic education. I consider it an important part of the individual, apart from having his general studies and his general education and learning [*morfosi*], to know how to do something….to be able to nail on the wall, what have you, or to be able to change a light bulb at his home.

He considers personal effectiveness, as discussed by Pring (2007), a vital learning outcome achieved only through vocational education: vocational students can learn how to effectively perform everyday tasks which require some technical knowledge. This argument is consistent with Dimos' attempt to render a positive picture of vocational education throughout his interview. Panos, who admits to feeling disappointed with current (vocational) educational reality, takes the argument a step further to affirm that the ideal learning pathway is apprenticeship programmes, an institution which has not flourished in Greece. In times of economic crisis, education is expected to serve a more utilitarian purpose, an expectation which may cover academic education as well.

A positive feature of vocational education emerges to be the delivery of a wide range of specialties and subsequently a wide range of learning options. Teachers ascertain the integration of vocational and academic knowledge and skills which are perceived to underpin practical and theoretical learning respectively. Vocational learning tends to be specialty-specific and transferable within the same vocational area. Vocational skills are projected as useful in life outside school, applicable to everyday life settings. To give an example, Loukas considers it important for his students to realise the following:

> Even if you don't use them [skills] for a third party, you can use them for yourself. You can make economic planning at your home, for your family….So, what we will be using in a business in scientific terms, we use it at home in practical terms.

Academic skills include Modern Greek and Mathematics. Kosmas supports their incorporation into the national curriculum with the argument that these enable students to "learn to think," along with learning "a way of working". He appears to echo Winch

(2013) and the argument that the state of know-how is associated with vocational education.

Along with specialty-specific skills, social skills form part of the national curriculum. These skills are anticipated to assist students in the development of adult behaviour and effective performance at work. This is reflected in the argument made by Kosmas: "Behaviour. You can't…have your own business and not know how to behave. You will lose all the clients". When Loukas touches upon classroom-based learning, he reaches a similar conclusion. Part of the learning achieved will enable students "to behave, of course, in their professional responsibilities and their professional area".

Academic education emerges as a point of reference in identifying benefits stemming from vocational education; the reference is framed by the economic crisis. Teachers defend the existence and purpose of vocational education when they state that it offers more formal qualifications than academic education. Kosmas affirms that vocational education "offers a general school leaving certificate and an extra vocational certificate. And most of these certificates have very strong professional rights as well". This affirmation highlights a change in policy on European VET: if vocational students used to acquire credentials limited to a particular occupation (Kerchhoff, 2000, p. 459), in contemporary society, they are provided with more credentials and more employment opportunities. The fact that the participation rate remains the same (around 30%) leads to the assumption that there are student needs which vocational education still cannot address.

Some teachers share concern about the relevance of the national curriculum to the labour market when they suggest that such relevance has not been achieved to the expected level. Chrysa argues that "the skills we are trying to have...they should be renewed much more frequently along with the curricula." This explains why Ikaros, with long experience of the workplace, advocates for an active role of the labour market in the organisation of vocational learning: "The labour market itself could set the standards, [and] state what it requires." Flexibility and adaptability on the job are projected as part of the standards: "Technical education should provide good bases [for the student] to manage to be flexible and evolve regardless of changes." The use of *technical* and *vocational* interchangeably may reveal the years of teaching experience in vocational education and subsequently awareness of policy changes in terminology.

Eleven teachers in **England** similarly support the existence of the vocational tradition. They view vocational education as a learning opportunity which is offered within formal education to equip students with qualifications for a particular occupation (or industry) or more broadly the labour market. They ascertain the integration of academic and vocational learning into the (traditional) vocational courses and study programmes, and organise vocational skills into two broad types: industry-specific and wider employability skills. In comparison with Greece, academic education similarly emerges as a point of reference in discussing vocational education.

Two of the teachers in this set of interviews adopt the more traditional approach to vocational education to stress that vocational students can become employable at a particular occupation or industry; these are Ben and Greta. What they seem to share is teaching experience with both full-time (classroom-based) and part-time (work-based) students. What they appear to have in common with teachers in Greece who hold a similar viewpoint of vocational education is a more direct relation to the labour market. Such a relation may have encouraged Greta to compare vocational education with academic education to conclude that what differentiates them is the degree of specificity of career preparation:

> The only thing is that vocational is specific, whereas academic is more general but they are all linked in some way to a vocational area. Generally speaking, you wouldn't usually get someone going to embark on a Masters degree without him having some idea of what career route they had in mind.

The policy proposition (DfE, 2011) that both academic education and vocational education should provide young people with the opportunity to prepare towards an occupation and to explore their potential for their future career pathway may resonate with Greta. With the focus on higher education, she stresses that education is vocational in essence: both are useful in getting a job.

Teachers generally agree that the learning content would be designed to assist students in developing work-based knowledge and skills specific to or wider than the area of study. Therefore, the integrated learning offered to students remains targeted at getting a job. Clive defines these skills as *technical* and *practical* respectively, to clarify that they form "the kind of things that will get them into a job". Work placement is projected as a useful tool for enhancing hands-on initial experience of the workplace. Some teachers share concern about limited placement opportunities for students. For

instance, Elinor argues that "if we are to make the students more employable, they should be given hands-on training, a job place. Their learning is not complete within a classroom, within a college". These teachers appear to consider it important for their students to get ready for productivity (see Grubb & Ryan, 1999); work placements would support students in that direction.

Teachers recognise that wider employability skills range from academic (or key) skills, such as English and Mathematics, to teamwork and interpersonal skills. For Alexa, the latter are associated with "communicating effectively, and getting used to an adult work environment as well". Social skills are therefore targeted at learning for the workplace, and expected to contribute to the development of behaviour suitable for the world of adults. Preparation for the world of adults is not limited to employability skills. Students can acquire wider knowledge that runs across college disciplines; emphasis is placed on equality and diversity. Edan specifies that at the college he teaches, "we are all encouraged to embed equality and diversity into all our sessions, throughout the year, in our scheme of learning". This indicate how state education policy (i.e., Equality Act 2010) is enacted and integrated into the college curricula.

Some teachers perceive a further divide in learning, between the so-called *purely* vocational courses, such as apprenticeships, and *mixed*, such as BTEC Level 3. Daisy, who teaches both A-levels and BTECs at college, uses the term *academic* to refer to vocational courses which integrate theory and practice:

> You can have a vocational course which is primarily work…Or you can have an academic vocational course which is all or it tends to be, the majority is in classroom. But everything has an emphasis on to how it works in the world of work as opposed to just pure theory.

She suggests that academic and vocational learning is associated with distinct learning settings and outcomes, with vocational being clearly linked to work. It is the element of work that dictates the need to maintain the division between academic and vocational.

Comparing vocational education with academic education emerges as an attempt to define vocational education and to highlight its significance in the life of young people. To give an example, Clive considers creativity and applicability to be advantages of vocational education. He stresses that "that is a strength of the vocational course, that it does bring in that creative element," and adds that "because you are doing practical stuff, you can immediately go away and apply it". The development of creative and applied skills forms part of vocational learning and serves as justification for the

existence of vocational education. Lucas et al. (2012) similarly identify opportunities for students to develop their creativity through vocational education. Clive appears to share opinion with Loukas, about the utility of vocational learning. Both teachers deliver elements of business studies through their courses.

On the other side, Dylan draws attention to what he perceives to be a drawback of vocational education:

> Because if you have finally taught them individual skills and not how they all link together, you might be creating someone who is technically skilled. But what about innovation? Freethinking? Because to be an engineer, it's not just a case of doing the same thing again and again. You have got to develop that thinking.

He reflects on the concept of being *technically skilled* to imply that traditionally, vocational students (doing engineering courses) need to accept and repeat what they are being taught. Given that Kosmas associates academic learning with know-that and vocational learning with know-how (see Winch, 2013), it may be that machinery-based courses are expected to lead to the performance of repetitive tasks. Lucas et al. (2012) regard critical thinking to be part of courses which use symbols. This implies that the vocational tradition is further divided into specialised traditions which underpin the vocational areas of study. Furthermore, Dylan's assertion may not strictly apply to full-time classroom-based courses. Throughout his interview, he discusses vocational teaching and learning in a broader sense, to include apprenticeships.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, findings indicate that the individual student is expected to enhance their human capital through vocational education, and develop useful skills which they can later apply in everyday life and the labour market. This indication serves as justification for the existence of the vocational tradition in both Greece and England. Human capital development is underpinned by personal effectiveness and practical utility (see Pring, 2007). Personal effectiveness refers to the ability of students to effectively perform everyday tasks which require some technical knowledge and skills; this becomes more evident in the case of Greece. Initial experience of the workplace emerges as a contributing factor to personal effectiveness; this becomes more evident in the case of England. Practical utility means that students can develop knowledge and skills applicable to everyday life in the present and the labour market in the future. Despite the subtle differences in the approach of teachers in Greece and England to the vocational tradition, they appear to agree that

vocational education can play a determining role in students being equipped with qualifications suitable for the enhancement of human capital and subsequent entry into the world of adults; in this case, the labour market.

The vocational tradition is projected as a more structured model of learning in the case of Greece and as a learning opportunity within formal education in the case of England. Teachers in England discuss the development of vocational skills in a more detailed and positive way. This stems from the structure of the economy which promotes the enhancement and implementation of skills (see Leitch, 2006). Differences in the experience of the economic crisis provide a possible explanation as to why teachers in Greece discuss vocational education in the context of the crisis. In this light, they advocate that vocational (rather than academic) education can better prepare students for making the first step into employment. In general, teachers' perceptions of vocational education are mainly determined by their subject matter.

6.2.2 Enriching the vocational tradition

Five teachers in **Greece** adopt a wider approach to vocational education to indicate that it offers students all-round preparation for life. They attribute to vocational education wider roles which include the development of students as a person. They, too, support its existence and purpose; in this case, on the grounds that any form of education needs to promote personal development. If Dimos discusses vocational education in a positive way, Nikolas sounds concerned about the role of vocational education in promoting learning in contemporary society.

Teachers agree that the purpose of vocational education encompasses both preparation for the labour market and personal development. Bela takes the concept of *vocational education* apart to discuss each aspect separately:

> The difficulty for us, the way I see it, is that its nature is dual. That is, it is both education and vocational. It's not training where you simply need to train, to offer the individual…some skills. It is at the same time education as well. That is, the student [*paidi*] needs to form an opinion about more general matters. You need…to find out what problems he has, his personality, to approach him.

She addresses the (policy) proposition that education should be vocational in essence to highlight the range of roles it could play in the development of students. She draws a line between training and education to indicate that education is not limited to employment but covers other aspects of life as well, aspects which require the

development and use of critical thinking. In this case, the process of thinking is perceived as part of a whole; of knowledge encompassing theory and practice. Though Bela reflects on the impact of parenthood on her view of educating young people, gender does not appear to influence the definition of vocational education. Andreas shares a similar perception of vocational education: "besides training, students acquire general education as well".

Generally, teachers specify that vocational education addresses a specific age group of students, thus ascertaining the structured stages of formal education. They affirm that it is a model of education which integrates academic and vocational learning acquired in different learning settings (the classroom and the workshop respectively). Such a model is assumed to engage young people in learning, particularly the less interested. Nikolas sounds concerned about the perceived lack of student engagement in learning. This is denoted by the use of the verb *should* in the following proposition: "It should offer a certificate with value, which means that not everyone who enters the vocational lyceum leaves with a certificate in the end, but only those who deserve it". Nikolas thus acknowledges the wider assumption that vocational education is an easy learning pathway and expresses interest in having the aspect of academic learning strengthened: students who perform well academically obtain the intended credentials.

Developing social skills through vocational education is discussed as part of personal development of students. Artemis and Bela, who both deliver courses in the field of IT, approach creativity as a social skill. Artemis associates creativity with freedom when she argues that "[vocational education] can release it and that is through the workshops because there, they have the freedom to create". Vocational education therefore emerges as a learning environment where students are free to explore aspects of their personality and discover the place they wish to have in life. At the same time, she sounds concerned about the role of structure in learning. Bela looks deeper into the meaning of creativity to state that vocational education could greatly support the *restless* students: "Those who have been versed from a young age and avoid the conventional pathway". Andreas discusses personal development of students achieved through enrichment activities which are integrated into the school curriculum: school competitions, collaboration projects with the local community and mobility projects beyond and within borders. Participation in such activities would enable students "to improve themselves personally as well, to learn things" equally important to preparation for employment.

Three teachers in **England** share a wider perception of vocational education, which entails the notions of *holistic* and *enrichment*; these are Adam, Fran and Hope. They support that vocational education prepares students for a way of life associated with a vocation, that is, "the direction they wish to move in and the goals they wish to achieve" (Billett, 2011, p. 41). This direction would permit the development of work-based skills as well as personal skills not strictly associated with working life. What these teachers seem to share is the delivery of human care courses.

For Hope, vocational education is a way of life which requires the integration of theory and practice; in other words, it brings together two traditionally divided parts of knowledge. She perceives vocational education as "a holistic way of life and you are learning to engage in a future career that is both practical-led and theoretical". She clarifies that having a student who can perform a task without knowing the theory behind it "is dangerous and is incorrect for anybody to be put in that situation".

Adam and Fran underline how vocational preparation accomplished through the courses they deliver can support students to develop an all-round personality. Adam asserts that vocational preparation covers various aspects of life:

> So we are educating them in lots of grounds. Yes, you are going to go into a vocation, however, some of you may be parents someday so we are educating you there as well, and to be an all-round person when you are out in society.

In particular, students would get ready to assume responsibilities associated with family life. Adam clearly adopts the assumption that students prepare for a vocation. He defines vocation as follows: "We are actually training them to work with people, so it is a vocation; it's not just a job we are training them for". Therefore, vocational education can prepare young people to get included in the labour market and society. Based on this definition, I decided to group courses delivered by participant teachers into human care and machinery-based. Furthermore, this may offer some explanation as to why teachers who deliver the machinery-based courses have a different perception of vocational education.

Teachers agree that vocational students have the opportunity to enrich their personality through additional courses and activities offered by colleges. These activities can range from sports and art events and outings to visits to other places and cities in England. When discussing students' aspirations, Fran points out that there are students who "don't always participate in the enrichment activities. They don't see it as

a whole. As in enjoying college or university life, if you like". What Fran is suggesting is that young people tend to focus on the development of employability skills and consciously distance themselves from enrichment activities. Though vocational education offers a holistic approach to learning, this may not be appreciated by all vocational students.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, findings indicate that vocational education can contribute to the enrichment of the human capital that young people possess. This can be achieved through personal development and the enhancement of personal skills. Vocational education is thus perceived as a learning pathway to the adoption of a way of life which facilitates inclusion in the labour market and society. The association of vocational education with the choice of a way of life becomes more evident in the case of England and may relate back to the inception of vocational education and the Industrial Revolution that started in England. What teachers in Greece and England have in common is avoidance of discussing the tradition of vocational education in terms of the economic crisis.

6.3 Motivation for vocational education

To understand what motivates young people to follow the vocational pathway to life, I will touch upon issues related to the identity of vocational students. Findings show that there are three overlapping groups of students and hence three overlapping reasons for choosing vocational education. Motivation is defined in terms of the explicit focus of discussion, which is generally intertwined with teachers' definition of vocational education. The reasons for vocational education cover the following: (a) students have a clear career focus which they choose to address through vocational education; (b) they are non-academically oriented, looking into other options to get qualified; (c) they wish to change their personal history; the latter becomes more evident in the case of Greece. In other words, vocational students recognise the importance of enhancing their human capital, in order to find their place in life and the labour market. The fact that some students may focus on inner needs illuminates a possible overlap between human capital and social capital: changes in their skill capital are expected to contribute to changes in the way they relate to themselves and other people (see Coleman, 1988).

In the European context, the identity of vocational students as a group of learners is delineated as heterogeneous: they tend to come from diverse socioeconomic and learning backgrounds, as opposed to the perceived homogeneous identity of academic students (Cedefop, 2013). What vocational students seem to share is lack of

interest in academic knowledge (European Commission, 2011), and hence the need for other options to remain in education. In Greece, Argyriou and Gatsoris (2011) similarly discern three broad categories of vocational students and motivation: (a) they have specific career goals; (b) they wish to pursue higher (vocational) studies by making use of special legislation; (c) they have no clear future goals yet wish to acquire formal qualifications; these students form the majority. They classify students in terms of employment goals. The goal of changing one's personal history, as discussed by participant teachers in my study, is not intertwined solely with economic goals and hence it would not be included in discussions about employment goals.

In England, Huddleston and Unwin (2007) highlight the diversity of the student population of further education colleges, which are considered the main providers of vocational education. They point out that college students, including vocational students, "represent an enormous range of different circumstances and any one class or group of students will be heterogeneous in nature;" different circumstances would refer to disposition to learning, "motivation, prior experience, expectations, and the way in which they are funded" (Huddleston & Unwin, 2007, p. 35). Motivation revolves around economic security rather than human security, as in personal growth through the process of changing one's personal history. In their study on young people's perceptions of vocational education, Atkins et al. (2011) emphasise that all participant students have "clear hopes and aspirations for their futures" (p. 31). They argue that those on the more practically-based courses identify the element of joy in work, whilst those on the more academically-based aim at progression at work. Participant teachers in my study identify the need of their students to experience joy in their vocational preparation. On the other side, progression at work appears to concern more students in England and much less students in Greece. Differences in aspirations may result from differences in the experience of the economic crisis.

6.3.1 Having a clear career focus

Five teachers in **Greece** indicate that young people follow the vocational pathway to life and the labour market because they have a clear career goal; among them is Bela, the only female teacher. Students have a clear idea of their future career pathway and a keen interest in the theme of their vocational studies. The economic crisis frames the context of discussion.

Teachers emphasise that students choose vocational education because they have a clear career focus: they tend to follow the (nuclear or extended) family tradition in

their area of study and they have a set working mindset. This means that they have made a conscious decision and prepare for an occupation (se Billet, 2011). Bela points out:

> There is a group of students who know why they chose what they chose and are doing very well, they find what suits them, they are having a good time as well, they learn and benefit the most from this school.

Some students may be deeply interested in their specialty and wish to learn more about it. Some may wish to immediately enter the labour market following graduation. This motivation may be underpinned by uncertainty about the future due to the economic crisis. Minos states about his students that, "I don't think that they have thought about that. They avoid thinking about that. They see what is going on around them. They are very disappointed". This indicates that dreams and aspirations can be affected by the economic crisis and subsequent economic insecurity. Furthermore, it implies that vocational education may be failing to meet the expectations of young people.

Regarding academic performance, those who perform well may wish to pursue higher studies delivered mainly in higher vocational education. Those who do not perform well and have possibly experienced failure in earlier stages of education can discover their potential and achieve through vocational education. This is reflected in the argument made by Kosmas:

> Here they discover that they can do a lot of things. They can do a lot of things with their hands. That is, they get back on their feet, they feel better while before they were rejected, let's say, from general education.

Vocational education is then projected as a learning environment where students can explore their potential which has not been apparently appreciated in other environments, and develop a sense of inclusion: now, they do not feel rejected. Loukas reflects on what may motivate students to pursue the courses he delivers. The conclusion he reaches reveals the impact of deeply-rooted assumptions about academic and vocational subject areas on students: "[Some] consider Finance to be easier training, which is a mistake….and there are some students who don't enrol because they consider it difficult because the main curriculum is considered to be Mathematics; which isn't Mathematics".

Three teachers in **England** explicitly state that young people choose vocational education because they already have or develop throughout their studies a clear idea

about the industry they wish to work in; these are Alexa, Ben and Greta. They explain that vocational students think that their studies match their future career goals; hence, it is a conscious decision.

Ben states that career-wise, engineering students are mainly interested in getting a job immediately after college or by doing an apprenticeship in the expectation of receiving a permanent job offer. Their interest in apprenticeships may pertain to the fact that targeted companies in the industry belong to those classified as highly attractive (Wolf, 2011, p. 34). Learning-wise, they would enjoy "getting something to do with their hands; something that they can see an end result from". Being practical therefore means generating results manually. Joy derives from witnessing abstract learning turn into a concrete outcome.

Focus-wise, students may pursue a family interest or tradition, thus addressing extrinsic motivation. Greta stresses that "sometimes parents are trying to encourage them into an area or sometimes it might be a family tradition". She appears to defend her (beauty therapy) students when she states that they "have an existing academic ability but show genuine interest in the subject area". By asserting that her students have the ability to perform academically, she responds to the wider assumption that vocational education is for the lower ability students (see DfE, 2011).

Alexa points out that her students have explored their further education options to realise "that they can get straight into university but still have time working with children, doing their vocational course". They would therefore consider their vocational course as a route to higher education and related employment. Alexa clarifies that regardless of vocational area, vocational students are usually those "who want to have a practical application for that qualification;" having a clear career focus would then be associated with pursuing a particular purpose in life.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers generally agree that vocational education is chosen by young people with a clear career pathway in mind or a keen interest in their area of study. Teachers in Greece focus on the process of learning when they touch upon how students feel about vocational education: they discover their interests and potential, they derive joy and they develop a sense of inclusion. Teachers in England focus on the learning outcomes when they point out that students aim for an apprenticeship leading to a job offer (thus securing employment) or some experience of the workplace (thus getting ready for productivity). In other words, they aim at more targeted enhancement of their human capital. One potential explanation lies in differences in the status of the national economy: Greece experiences

economic austerity and hence economic insecurity, whilst England is in the process of recovery.

6.3.2 Getting qualified

Eight teachers in **Greece** indicate that young people choose vocational education because they wish to get qualified. They do not perform well academically, so they follow the vocational pathway to completing their studies at upper secondary level and obtaining the school leaving certificate. They tend to enjoy the process of learning in workshops where they work with others and use their talents. The economic crisis may have similarly impacted their dreams and aspirations.

Regarding the process of learning, students appear to be interested in practical work rather than theoretical study. They may have learning gaps which find difficult to fill; however, they tend to perform well when it comes to workshops. These points are encapsulated in the argument made by Chrysa:

> Whichever course is theoretical and demands not regurgitating but some basic theoretical rules which they need to know, as we say in everyday life, they resist.…They really like practical experience. That is, when they are in the workshops…their reaction is completely different.

This reaction may stem from the realisation that they can effectively use their talents in the workshops, talents which they may have found difficult to demonstrate through academic education. What they seem to enjoy the most is working with others and creating things. Christos affirms that "they get joy from using their hands, doing some manual activity, some technical work". In other words, talents developed through vocational education are associated with manual work which, in turn, would be associated with practical learning.

Regarding their dreams and aspirations, students may have been deeply affected by the economic crisis. They tend to think that they will be unemployed in their area of study or have to migrate to another country. As a result, their motivation in their studies would be to obtain the school leaving certificate, a certificate offering some form of security and investment in the future. Ikaros sounds concerned about his students when he states the following: "Unfortunately, the goal after the crisis is nothing. That is, a paper which says that they have finished a lyceum". The conviction that there are no relevant job prospects would affect their disposition to their studies. As Artemis points out, "Students [*paidia*] are very disappointed, unfortunately. And this makes them to

disregard in general an area which they may have chosen, they may like it but disregard it because…there is great insecurity in terms of employment opportunities". Bela takes this argument a step further to touch upon student expectations from vocational education: "It is as if they have lost, they do not believe that anything through education could help them to do better in their life. That is, for them it is a game they have lost, education". What Bela implies is that students have lost their belief in the role of vocational education in improving life chances. They do not believe that they can achieve positive changes which "bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways" (Coleman, 1988, p. S100).

In comparison with Greece, nine teachers in **England** similarly indicate that young people follow the vocational pathway because they are non-academically oriented and wish to remain in education. The most notable feature of their identity as learners is their fear of taking exams to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This may relate to the fear of being judged and rejected. Teachers explain that their students may have developed exam anxiety and be looking into other learning and assessment options.

Teachers assert that there are students who generally enjoy the opportunity to learn outside the classroom, complete a work placement and gain practical hands-on experience; vocational education would offer them the opportunity to meet their learning needs. When discussing vocational learning, Floyd observes that this tends to be developed "away from the classroom which is what 95% of my students want to do really". In the classroom, they enjoy teamwork, ranging from coursework and assignments to presentations and solving problems with others. This may reveal their need to be part of a team; to have a sense of inclusion. Interest in activities not traditionally associated with academic study may have been triggered by negative feelings about exams. Clive affirms that what makes vocational education attractive is the lack of exams. This is illuminated in the following quotation:

> It is shocking how many people come into further education with almost a phobia of exams, an absolute fear; they have had such a bad experience, so to do a course where you don't have to sit an exam for them is absolutely fantastic.

Clive states that students feel fantastic in a learning environment without exams and implies that they may have associated exams with a need to prove themselves. In the case that they feel rejected from academic education, then exams may be a reminder of

having being judged and rejected. Therefore, the need to be part of a team may be more intense for vocational students rather than academic students.

Regardless of how they may perform academically, students generally wish to progress in education and obtain a qualification which can lead to immediate employment or higher education. When discussing progression of students in the area of Health and Social Care, Celia reveals the following:

> A lot of the students who is on Level 2 originally applied for Level 3. So they use that Level 2 experience as a stepping stone to enable and to upscale, gain a Maths and English grade C or above, and progress onto a Level 3.

Once they obtain their Level 3 qualification, students would probably use that qualification within their region. This may pertain to the economic stability of the country. In contrast to Greece, geographical mobility would be associated with individual ambition rather than economic sustainability.

When discussing vocational courses, Floyd uses the term *not academically gifted* to define the group of students who tend to do the more technically-based courses. Later on, he asserts that the phrase does not do students justice:

> It would be unfair to say that the people that come here aren't academically gifted. I think it is a choice that they have just really reached their saturation point with academia really, and they are looking for a change, and looking to explore other avenues.

He appears to support that being an academic or vocational learner is a matter of personal choice. Unlike Floyd, Hope perceives such a decision as something that students cannot avoid because they are those young people "that the academic side don't want and that is my point". In other words, she points to Bourdieu to indicate that they are the ones who do not possess the required cultural capital: "the ability or talent is itself the product of an investment of time and cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). A possible feeling of rejection from the academic side (Hope) may explain how students have reached their saturation point with academic study (Floyd).

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers generally indicate that vocational education is chosen by young people who cannot remain in academic education and look for an opportunity to complete their studies at upper secondary level. Their responses reflect the traditional divide of learners into academic

and vocational. Vocational students are perceived as learners who would prefer practical learning through manual and technical work mainly achieved outside the classroom. Vocational education would offer them a learning environment to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and talents which may not be supported by academic education. Fear of exams and subsequent fear of being judged and rejected is an issue of concern for students in England. This does not apply to students in Greece because they carry on demonstrating their qualifications through exams. Lack of belief in the role of education in improving life chances is an issue of concern for students in Greece. This does not apply to students in England possibly because of a less intense experience of the economic crisis.

6.3.3 Changing personal history

Five teachers in **Greece** indicate that their students wish to change their personal history. They explain that there are vocational students who come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and wish to make some change to their life. Teachers in this group are all male and discuss issues raised in this set of responses in a parental way. To give an example, Fanis and Orestes, both working in an evening school, use the Greek term *paidia* (meaning *children*) to include students who may be around their age.

Coming from a disadvantaged background means that some vocational students have vulnerable backgrounds. Some may have the experience of unemployment because both parents are unemployed or they are the only members of the family employed. Some may have learning difficulties and some may encounter serious personal problems. Minos, who has over twenty years of teaching experience in vocational education, sounds aware of the needs of each group of students. For instance, he stresses that those from vulnerable backgrounds, "they feel inclined to achieve economic and social progress, and prestige". Those with serious personal problems are understood to "become very good. They develop, that is, into decent students". By *decent* he is suggesting that they start to respect themselves. One may argue that Minos implies that students appreciate the opportunity to climb up the economic and social ladder through vocational education. On the other side, feeling validated may underpin students' effort for change. This can be supported with the statement made by Nikolas: "The only thing I have understood…that touches them is love and genuine interest". In other words, vocational students need to feel validated, in order to manage to find their place in life and contribute to social cohesion.

Fanis and Orestes touch upon issues related to the role of education in social inclusion. Fanis underlines that his students, "they have experienced some exclusion". They may have learning gaps, only filling them and raising their level of knowledge is not the perceived or intended change to their background. Rather, it is the need to start to believe in themselves, in order to achieve and progress. He explains his perception below:

> Their main problem isn't whether they have a lot of general knowledge, whether they know History. It is that they are students [*paidia*] with low self-confidence….I think that within these schools they realise that they can achieve. That is, their self-confidence is enhanced. This is something that I have experienced.

Vocational education would then emerge as a learning environment where students can reach personal growth and development. When he discusses how his students appreciate their studies, Orestes confirms that they have the experience of low self-confidence and clarifies the meaning of exclusion: "They think that they are low potential students or at least society made them feel that they live at the margins, that is, of education and at the margins of society in terms of qualifications, opportunities". He appears to echo Brine (2006) and her argument that in a knowledge-driven economy and society, those who have a low level of knowledge may be at risk of social exclusion.

Two teachers in **England** indicate that the wish to change their personal history motivates young people to choose vocational education. These teachers are Adam and Beth who work in the same region. Vocational students would generally come from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background. Some students may be experiencing poverty; some may have been disengaged from lower secondary education; some may be facing behavioural or other types of problems. What they seem to have in common is the wish for some change in their life.

Adam discerns a difference in reasons for his students choosing vocational education. The learning content may resonate with some, particularly with students mainly preparing for work with vulnerable people. These students "had problems in their life before and they want to make a difference now" with the support of their vocational qualification. In other words, they may focus on turning a past negative experience into a positive learning outcome. Some of the students preparing for work with children "feel it is an easy job" to do. In the first case, students would attend to an

inner need. In the second case, they may be influenced by the wider assumption that vocational studies are easy to pursue (see DfE, 2011).

Beth identifies school disengagement and lack of career direction as reasons for vocational choice. She asserts that vocational students "have just stumbled upon us because the school haven't really come up to their expectations". Students would then be "looking for which is the most exciting option for them to do". What seems to excite them is "seeing their end product" and "hearing that positive feedback, both from customers and from the staff". This is interpreted as a need to be productive and to feel validated as a student and a future employee. In other words, students would develop a positive stance on the future leaving negative experiences behind them.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers generally agree that there are young people who choose vocational education because they wish to make some change in their life. They may come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and have diverse learning goals; however, what seems to bring them together is the need to leave the past behind them and get hope for the future. This need is reflected in students' belief that they have low potential (and hence low prospects) or their eagerness to receive positive feedback on their work (and feel accepted). The location of the vocational school or college as well as the possible adoption of a paternal outlook on issues related to motivation for vocational education may have influenced these teachers' perception of vocational students.

6.4 Vocational education as a means of labour market inclusion

As mentioned earlier, participant teachers revisit the vocational tradition with the majority of them supporting the traditional purpose of vocational education: preparation for specialised and immediate employment. In other words, they offer some insight into how vocational students can enhance their human capital for employment. In this section, they indicate how students can invest their human capital in the labour market to get included and contribute to production, economic growth and social cohesion. Most of the teachers discuss vocational education as a means of securing employment, ideally and in reality. By *ideally* I mean that they recognise the impact of the economic crisis on the operation of the labour market (and the economy); this becomes more evident in the case of Greece. Some view vocational education as a means of promoting social justice by offering students a second chance in education and life. Findings in this section are framed by the academic discussion about VET being a second chance in education and employment (Karmel & Woods, 2008) on the one hand,

and the ongoing dilemma whether to view vocational education as a diversion from occupations associated with higher status and higher education studies or a safety net to avoid occupations leading to lower status (see Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Shavit & Müller, 2000).

6.4.1 Vocational education as a second chance in education

Five teachers in **Greece** perceive vocational education as a second chance for students to get educated and qualified, in order to enter the labour market. It is projected as a second chance mainly for those who are considered non-academic and those who live in communities designated as less developed. It is anticipated that in this way, vocational education can contribute to the promotion of social justice through education.

Vocational education provides students who may not perform well academically and encounter the risk of exclusion from education with a chance to complete upper secondary education, in order to get educated and qualified. Lack of academic performance refers to the state where students may have failed exams in the academic school and need to resit or repeat the school year. Fanis points out that there are "many students [in the morning schools] who in the first grade of lyceum had problems, had a hard time, failed, were retained a grade and they enrol to our schools". For Nikolas, vocational education is a second chance to pursue higher studies, thus arguing for higher education eligibility of vocational students. He does not directly associate this chance with better employment opportunities but with the process of growing and maturing. He explains that participation in higher vocational education "will give them time to mature more, see what they have been missing this far, or what their friends are missing, to maybe decide to use it in going one step further". In other words, it is a second chance for students to find some or the right direction in life.

Teachers indicate that the vocational school offers students the chance to become educated and qualified members of the local community. According to Nikolas, "There are whole regions where children in the region participate solely in vocational education. In those communities, vocational education has a role to play because it is the future of its children". Therefore, it provides a future to younger members of the community and the community itself through investment in education and qualifications. Artemis stresses that these are the communities designated as less developed; in her words, "the more depressed region". She provides an explanation as to why this may be the case:

> The family was depressed in the sense that both parents had to work. And at some point the child would have to go to work as well….You will go there [the vocational school] to get a certificate, in order to go to work.

What she is suggesting is that though the vocational certificate can function as a safety net to avoid unemployment, at the same time, it can be a diversion from other options.

Four teachers in **England** similarly view vocational education as a second chance in education promoting social justice. They discuss vocational education as a process which offers students the possibility to get educated and become qualified for the labour market. It is compared with academic education to emerge as a second chance in education and employment, and to entail the notion of *alternative*.

Ben portrays vocational education as a second chance in education and employment. He refers to the case of students doing A-levels and failing halfway through; in this case, vocational courses would serve as a second chance to complete further studies:

> So say somebody has tried A-levels and they have done the first year and failed, it gives them a bit of a safety net that says, well, you're not a failure in real life. You're not going to work in [name of supermarket] for the rest of your career.

Unlike Artemis, he insists that vocational education can serve as a safety net to prevent vocational students from getting or remaining at less desirable jobs.

Clive perceives vocational courses as "that alternative way of demonstrating the evidence that you can do something that isn't just sit down and write exam answers". This perception may reflect the wider policy attempt to establish "vocational education as a viable alternative to more academic routes" (NFER, 2014, p. 2). In this context, the use of alternative has positive connotations, to denote an action more constructive than taking exams. Adam acknowledges lack of parity of esteem between academic and vocational education when he asserts that the latter "should be an equal chance. You choose to do vocational, not because you haven't got the academic ability". Along the same lines with Nikolas, he implies that young people need to demonstrate the ability to participate in vocational education. In this light, the meaning of second chance does not necessarily entail the meaning of equal chance leading to equal outcomes.

Adam identifies a role for colleges in local development. His assertion that they are "the biggest providers in that education" with established links with employers

indicates that colleges have a role to play in providing younger members of the local community with the chance to complete further education and pursue aspirations relevant to their studies. Alexa and Ben reach a similar conclusion about vocational courses offered to students aged 14-16. They share concern, however, about the aim and quality of these courses, pointing out that they are developed to enable students not performing well in lower secondary education to progress into further education. Reference to students aged 14-16 may stem from a different understanding of the term school-based vocational education used in these two interviews.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers generally perceive vocational education as a second chance for young people to get educated and qualified; in particular, those who may not have succeeded in academic education. Therefore, it offers the chance to enhance and demonstrate their human capital, and become educated and qualified members of the local community. Teachers in Greece reflect on the location of the vocational school to point to evidence that there are more vocational schools in regions designated as less developed. Teachers in England express awareness of policy attempts to promote vocational education as a learning pathway alternative to academic education. This does not necessarily mean that they are on a par with each other.

6.4.2 Vocational education as a means of securing a place in the labour market

Teachers in **Greece** discuss vocational education as a means of securing employment, ideally or in reality. They indicate that vocational education could support its students to meet skills needs of the labour market and become employable, invest in productivity and contribute to economic growth. They emphasise that the role of vocational education in preparation for life is intertwined with the structure of economy. To give an example, Andreas recognises that there could be a role in economic growth and development to clarify that "our hope mustn't be too high, we obviously realise that this role will be even stronger when there are employment opportunities".

Under the influence of the economic crisis, teachers agree that vocational education could contribute to local and, by extension, national development. This could be achieved when the local community supports the delivery of vocational specialties which could contribute to turning local resources into employment and growth opportunities. These points are encapsulated in Bela's observation about interdependence of national economies:

> Development without products to sell someplace else, to some other country, can't happen. How can that happen? Through technical vocational education….a community with certain potential because of a local feature, what have you, local production, should strengthen vocational education in that direction.

Dimos confirms Bela's observation about economic interdependence and highlights the role of vocational education in identifying benefits from land resources: "That is, agricultural products and tourism, the primary sector. Who will work on that today when the demanding foreign markets want high value products?....We need, however, individuals who will have some idea". These individuals would be the vocational students (and leavers) who could contribute to individual and national development and subsequently social cohesion.

Filling skills gaps in the labour market emerges as a matter of interest to teachers. Orestes draws upon his subject matter to define the phenomenon of skills gaps as *structural unemployment*. He explains that "there isn't specialised personnel to fill positions which don't demand higher educational attainment but simply specialisation, skills. I think that we don't have qualified workforce". These positions may then remain unfilled or be filled by individuals with higher levels of qualifications, a phenomenon discussed in detail by McGuinness and Pouliakas (2016). Orestes is suggesting that an increase in the percentage of vocational students will contribute to a higher level of specialisation for the labour market and a higher rate of employment through vocational education. Orestes perceives vocational education as an investment in future career progression.

> Because the environment is in flux, at some point, you may find a job but very shortly lose it. The thing is on the basis of the knowledge and qualifications you have at a personal level to take a leap…so that at some point, to be your own boss.

Using the lens of human capital to understand the statement above, Orestes views vocational education as a net to collect qualifications suitable for progression in the labour market, and indicates that success depends on the individual (to take a leap).

Teachers recognise the complicated nature of employment, as reflected in the assumption that in times of economic crisis, vocational education and the economy may be at interdependence. Ikaros acknowledges that vocational education could assist students in meeting skills gaps to stress that there are fewer employment opportunities due to the crisis. He confirms the observation made by Orestes that "many companies

are looking for specialised personnel and can't find them. That is, they need specialised workers in many areas…and they can't find them". He adds that "on the other side, there are no jobs. Since shops close down". Minos has a more positive outlook on the matter when he indicates that vocational students could be qualified to address labour market needs in the long run.

> I started delivering in workshops any subject that was related to new technologies….the new style of electrical engineering. The labour market, until a few years ago, didn't have technicians to do that job. There were old style technicians….by definition, we started preparing new generations of technicians nearly ten years ago.

Some teachers sound concerned about the direction of the economy and the subsequent direction for vocational education. To give an example, Fanis is concerned about the role of the state in the operation of vocational education and the phenomenon of skills mismatch. He interprets skills mismatch as a downside to the longstanding direction of the economy towards (higher) academic education leading to *desk jobs*. He proposes that "the economy must turn towards vocational education but it must turn somehow more targeted. Its form has changed". Implementing a more targeted approach to vocational education means addressing the question of "what vocational education do we want? What human beings do we want to prepare?" On the one hand, Fanis recognises the role of education in general and vocational education in particular in the preparation of future citizens. On the other hand, he highlights aspects of being a citizen: playing a specific role in the labour market.

Eleven teachers in **England** perceive vocational education as a means of securing employment. This can be achieved in two ways. During their studies, vocational students can prepare to address skills needs through volunteering or work placements. Following completion of their studies, they can meet labour market needs relevant to the area and level of their formal qualifications. Teachers affirm that even during recession, there are positions available for vocational students since they comprise the highest share of the future workforce. Vocational education is expected to enable students to play a role in business productivity and economic growth.

Some teachers choose to discuss the opportunity students have to do voluntary work, for instance, with organisations running charity shops or in projects organised by colleges in collaboration with the local community. Greta points out that "we are expected to deal with the community as well, and encourage the community to come in.

And they do". It is assumed that by applying their skills in a social setting other than college, students can familiarise themselves with the world of work and enhance their human capital accordingly. On the other side, they can introduce their (formal) qualifications to future employers and assist them in identifying future employees on the basis of "information about the underlying abilities, persistence, and other valuable traits of people" (Becker, 1993, p. 19). In contrast to England, voluntary work does not emerge as topic of discussion in Greece possibly because the institution was not widely supported the years prior to the economic crisis (see Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014).

Some insist that there are job opportunities for vocational students (college leavers) even during recession. They stress that vocational education prepares students for occupations that correspond to the largest share of the workforce, thus contributing to a secure place in the labour market. Clive touches upon human capital development through vocational education for both the individual and production in the quotation below:

> And even when we are sort of at the height of recession and there is people being laid off and, there is always a need for IT people….it doesn't matter how many high flying graduates you have got in the sort of IT management positions, if you haven't got a good solid team on the ground keeping it running.

He thus perceives a contributing role for vocational students in sustainability and growth of business organisations. Floyd implies that human capital development is determined by the structure of the economy as well. Unlike (most) teachers in Greece, he sounds positive when he claims that where a vocational area may not secure employment anymore, a new and more productive area may emerge. He refers to renewable energy to support his claim:

> I think so as well….although you might get one area of an economy or a global issue that is having a down effect on every country in the world, there is always something that is coming up on the back of it.

Dylan describes how vocational students could achieve career progression through accumulation of work experience when he states the following: "It is you start at ground level, you work through, you work on a shop floor, you become a supervisor on a shop floor". In doing so, he is suggesting that vocational education is a safety net from occupations at ground level.

Certain amount of attention is drawn to the fact that there is perceived skills shortage (or skills gap) in sectors covered by vocational education. Teachers agree that students can get equipped with skills suitable to address competition and meet the needs of employers; in certain sectors, the (labour market) demand would be larger than the supply. Edan observes that "there is a really big skills gap in the industry where we are crying out for people really. And that is across the whole industry sectors". He provides a possible explanation for the perceived gap when he reveals that students would "see gardening as a low-paid, low ability job really". In doing so, he implies that parity of esteem between academic and vocational occupations has not been reached yet.

Some teachers sound sceptical about the standing of vocational education in formal education; among them are Dylan and Edan. Edan sounds concerned about perceived policy emphasis placed on enhanced permeability between vocational and higher education (HE). His concern is reflected in the following question: "So should it be seen as a negative if they don't progress to HE? Because at the moment, it is seen as a negative if they perhaps don't finish their Level 3 which is two years". His question is interpreted as a response to the debate revolving around the relation between vocational education and higher education, with Edan then arguing for the value of vocational education in its own right.

Dylan's scepticism mainly rests on whether BTEC qualification holders can indeed use their vocational qualifications for immediate entry into the labour market. He specifies that those who choose to only do BTEC courses "would have to then do other stuff as well to be employable". He reveals that local employers "will more likely take a student on if he has done an NVQ only than if he has done a BTEC only". The explanation may lie in his statement that "the focus is more on what the employer wants in the way of a skill and knowledge," a fact which he perceives as a limitation of vocational teaching and learning. This explanation indicates possible tensions between individual interests of students (BTECs) and collective needs of employers (NVQs).

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers indicate that vocational education can assist students in securing a place in the labour market by meeting skills needs and subsequently contributing to productivity and economic growth. As such, it is envisaged to support the enhancement of human capital: "the programme changes the potential productivity on the job so that an employer hires them" (Grubb & Ryan, 1999, p. 15). Teachers sound aware of the operation of the labour market when they state that there are skills gaps and mismatches (see McGuinness & Pouliakas, 2016) with regards to occupations associated with vocational

education: jobs remain vacant or are covered by young people with higher levels of qualifications; the latter becomes more evident in Greece. If teachers in England focus on the current state of affairs, teachers in Greece discuss the ideal and the real as framed by the economic crisis. The structure and status of the economy would determine the focus of interest in the discussion.

Concluding

Findings from the interview data indicate that the less dominant discourse of vocational education recognises and accepts the policy direction towards enhancement of the human capital at an individual and collective level. In this way, they accept that accumulation of human capital can facilitate the process of keeping a society together: individuals can get included in the labour market through employment relevant to their studies, thus avoiding exclusion and marginalisation, two of the perceived social cohesion challenges. To support young people of all interests, talents and abilities in a socially just manner, there should be learning opportunities such as the vocational pathway to remain in education and qualify for the labour market. Participant teachers suggest that the link between vocational education and the labour market should be strengthened. In times of economic austerity, teachers in Greece reflect on the purpose of (vocational) education and propose that there should be a link between the education policy and the economic policy. Teachers acknowledge that the academic tradition has fundamentally been stronger than the vocational, and advocate a change of focus in policy direction, in order to address economic disruption and high rates of unemployment. Becoming a citizen is associated with the process of becoming a worker. In times of recession, teachers in England consider the role of vocational education in the economy to reach the conclusion that it can contribute to the sustainability and growth of business organisations and subsequently competitiveness. They insist that there are positions in the labour market available for and targeted at vocational students: they qualify to become part of the largest workforce in organisations and hence support the establishment of the solid ground required for competitiveness and excellence. In general, vocational education emerges as a net for students to collect qualifications, in order to demonstrate readiness for productivity, get included in the labour market and support the cohesiveness of a society.

Chapter 7

Participant Teachers' Perceptions of the Relation between Vocational Education and Society in Greece and England

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have addressed the research question of how vocational education is envisaged by participant teachers in the interview study to support vocational students to find their place in society in Greece and England. The purpose is to render a more detailed picture of the relation between vocational education and society, and the envisaged role in social cohesion in times of economic crisis. Findings reveal that participant teachers recognise the role of human capital in the development of social capital through vocational education: social capital and coexistence with others is based on enhanced human capital. It becomes evident that teachers on the more technically-based courses consider it crucial that the development of social capital and social ties is targeted at enhancing individual competence of young people. They should and could develop social competences which would enable them first to integrate into the labour market and then to transfer their competences to society and social settings other than work. Where vocational education is perceived as a traditional social unit, young people are then expected to learn to coexist with others through the creation of social bonds in their own right. Social interaction takes place in the classroom and the workshop between teachers and students. In this learning environment, they assume distinct social roles. These roles would be determined by approaches to the vocational tradition. They may resemble the roles assumed in the world of work or blend the worlds of education and work. In both cases, reciprocity is required in terms of expectations. Participant teachers identify three overlapping aspects of the role of vocational education in supporting students to get included in society as follows: (a) finding a positive destination in life; (b) having a realistic view of life; (c) recognising one's value. Responses provided by teachers unveil the place where human capital and social capital overlap on the one hand, and the place in life reserved for vocational students.

7.2 Vocational education as a social unit

Findings from the interview data indicate that vocational education is perceived as a social unit. In comparison with any type of education or school, in the vocational unit there is similarly "a close degree of closure among peers, who see each other daily, have

expectations towards each other, and develop norms about each other's behaviour" (Coleman, 1988, p. S106). Generally, participant teachers who deliver the more technically-based courses indicate that students' behaviour is built on social competences: students learn to relate to each other, in order to perform a certain task or practise social responsibility. In other words, they build social capital on the basis of human capital. By becoming *the right person for the job* (Colley et al., 2003, p. 488) they become the right member for a society. Participant teachers who teach the human care courses view vocational education as a social unit where students have the opportunity to develop a sense of closure and build social bonds. In other words, students are able to enhance their social capital in its own right.

7.2.1 Becoming socially competent

Five teachers in **Greece** suggest that vocational education supports students to become socially competent. This means that they develop an identity which is associated with the occupation of choice and underpinned by the values of collaboration and professional attitude. Social responsibility emerges as an integral element of their identity and practice. Networking is described as a desired outcome from the development of social competences in the context of vocational education. Respondents in this group are all male teachers who deliver courses which permit networking online or in person, such as IT (in the case of Fanis) and accounting (in the case of Loukas) respectively.

In vocational education, young people learn to become team players and recognise the value of collaboration. Ikaros points out the following:

> Vocational education, by its nature, is collective....you can't see soloists in vocational education. It demands collaborations. It demands teams. You can't do otherwise….You can't have a soloist who knows everything and does everything. You will have to collaborate with others. Clearly.

In doing so, he implies that vocational students develop a sense of identity through the process of becoming part of a team and sharing resources with team members. Knowledge and skills accumulated by the individual through the process of teaching and learning can then be invested in the creation of teams which permit collaboration. It is highlighted that vocational students cannot become *a soloist*. This point is interpreted as an acknowledgement of the assumption that vocational education does not support

excellence; hence students would not be encouraged or expected to excel in life. Fanis explicitly highlights the collective nature of vocational education when he stresses that his students make use of social networks available online "to promote their work, to show what they are doing". He ascertains that regardless of their specialty, students tend to use the resources available to them, in order to network with their colleagues and access more potential clients in the future. With emphasis on his students, he clarifies that "those who are technicians, they try to collaborate with those who are developers to have a larger circle of clients". This echoes Bourdieu (1986) and his argument that the development of social capital may be the outcome of a strategy which is built on ongoing sociability. Furthermore, it can contribute to a better understanding of why social networks in Greece have flourished since the wake of the economic crisis (Sotiropoulos & Bourikos, 2014).

Vocational students learn to develop a professional attitude towards others and practise social responsibility. Teachers on the machinery-based courses suggest that their students learn to be responsible for the safety of themselves and others. Minos states: "Huge responsibility. When it comes to technicians, it is much higher…the responsibility they need to demonstrate compared to other specialties". Social competence to practise responsibility means that students conform to standards and regulations in their vocational area. They conform to norms which define the community of (future) practice and the process of developing social capital within and outside their vocational area. Heikkinen (2004) similarly concludes that social responsibility defines the worker socially competent to build social capital. Minos goes into detail about what it is that his students need to learn to become socially competent: "To make sure to keep a distance from a fellow person when working with electricity on….because if something happens to him, his fellow person will be electrocuted as well". Health and safety issues cut across human capital and social capital: vocational students conform to standards and regulations to protect themselves (individual) and others (collective) from potential threat or danger. Loukas indicates that his students learn to socialise to their intended occupation through their studies when he emphasises the following:

> Their behaviour, I don't think that because of their learning in Finance they will be assisted in behaving out there with the general public. They will be able to behave, of course, mainly in their professional duties and their professional field.

What Loukas is suggesting is that there is a difference between general socialisation and professional socialisation. Though vocational students have the opportunity to become socially competent, this opportunity may be limited to the occupation of (future) practice. In this light, social capital development through vocational education would not necessarily facilitate coexistence and the creation of social ties.

Five teachers in **England** similarly imply that vocational students learn to become socially competent. The definition of being socially competent encompasses the values of collaboration and professionalism, values which define the identity of students in terms of their area of study. In vocational education, students develop a mindset which enables them to be the right person for the labour market and society. In this light, they learn to coexist with others to get the job done, regardless of personal feelings about the social setting. Though they may generally feel part of a team, this does not appear to be an inner need or goal for those who have a clear career focus. Practising responsibility for oneself and others is considered an aspect of professionalism. Among respondents in this group is Beth, the only female teacher.

In comparison with Greece, collaboration and social responsibility are similarly considered values which define the identity of vocational students. In certain cases, students develop a sense of being part of a team. Edan (horticulture) asserts that his students are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging to a team and practise responsibility for themselves and their fellow students:

> My hortics, I always say they are a team. They will help each other, especially when they do practicals….So if one of them sees another student being unsafe, whether they are aware of that or not, they will help. If they are stuck, they will help.

The risk element forms an integral part of the machinery-based courses and indicates that regardless of age, students on courses such as Horticulture may find themselves in a difficult learning setting where they need to trust each other. Furthermore, it indicates that avoidance of risk can bring individuals closer together and, by extension, strengthen the cohesiveness of a society by building "norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). Ben confirms that vocational courses offer students the opportunity to collaborate, only to clarify that this does not necessarily generate a sense of belonging to a team. Rather, it facilitates the process of completing an assignment and subsequently getting the job done: "That is where the interaction takes place with their peers, trying to find out what

they need to do within the assignment". Students on the courses Ben delivers tend to focus on acquiring formal qualifications as a means of achieving and progressing. The observation that they do not aim to develop a sense of belonging suggests that they do not consider the development of social capital through social ties as important as getting the job done. Resources would then be shared when considered necessary or appropriates, and connections among team members would be loose.

Floyd acknowledges that vocational students can develop social competences, in the classroom or the workshop. This does not necessarily imply that they work towards getting to know each other better and building social ties:

> But they very soon get into a culture where they have to work alongside people. And they are very often prompted that not everybody you work with you are going to particularly like their methods or their styles or even them as a person….But I think it teaches them valuable lessons in life of acceptability and equality and diversity as well, so it is a good thing.

What Floyd is suggesting is that vocational students are engaged in ongoing professional socialisation. Students learn to be professional leaving personal feelings aside, in order to become part of a team and collaborate to get the job done. By developing a sense of belonging to the community of future practice, they prepare to practise acceptability in life and society. Floyd is understood to draw a link between vocational education and social cohesion. By learning to accept circumstances and people as they are, students are able to develop life skills suitable for promoting equality and diversity. Along the same lines, Beth considers it important for her students to learn to work alongside people who they may not like: "what you have got to learn to do is get on with them and be professional". It is assumed that if students learn to coexist in the work setting with people who they may not like, then they may be competent to do the same in any social setting. In that case, they may contribute to social cohesion and social order.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, findings generally indicate that vocational students on the more technically-based courses become socially competent by developing a mindset on the basis of collaboration and professionalism. Vocational education is perceived as a means of supporting students to enhance social competences through teamwork and networking, and contribute to social capital development. It is obvious from the research data that in the case of Greece, learning as becoming is targeted at learning to practise social responsibility and to protect each other. This is in

line with Heikkinen's (2004) identification of socially competent workers. Furthermore, it is associated with recognising the importance of networking in enhancing life prospects. In the case of England, the process refers to learning to accept others as they are, thus demonstrating the competency to accept (their) reality. Furthermore, it is associated with relating to others to achieve results; hence benefit from "profits which accrue from membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Differences in the status of the national economy may impact the focus of interest in the discussion. What is not clear is whether vocational students are able to assume a more powerful role in the team to excel in life and society.

7.2.2 Building social bonds

Nine teachers in **Greece** imply that vocational students can build social bonds in the context of vocational education. The vocational specialty and the vocational school itself emerge as the principal common theme that brings students closer together. They both function as social settings where students share time and space together, get to know each other and bond through specific common interests. If the majority of teachers in this group discuss the need of students to develop a sense of belonging in a positive way, Nikolas touches upon the downside to this need, thus being consistent in his approach to vocational education and the decision to highlight its less positive aspects.

The vocational specialty emerges as one of the two key social settings in vocational education where students can bond. This setting is framed by the use of specialty terminology, shared interests in terms of their studies and the need to develop a sense of commitment to their specialty. The use of specialty terminology is expected to facilitate common understanding among teachers and students on the same course. Bela refers to her subject matter to underline that "I lay great emphasis on that, when we talk, to use the terminology of the profession, to understand what we are saying, and to start thinking as sharp-end professionals". Bela implies that when individuals share the same language, they can turn that language into a tool to create a community (of learning), establish common grounds and acquire a sense of belonging. Though she stresses that this is a professional community, she implies that it is based on social bonds. In such a community (of learning), teachers and students are assumed to foster reciprocity (by expecting the same understanding), a key feature of social capital (Putnam, 1995, 2000).

In this community, vocational students share common interests like all other students. Andreas clarifies that the process of social bonding is similar for both academic and vocational students to identify the following difference:

> The only difference, that a student [*mathitis*] will relate to the student he shares the same professional interests with since they will be spending together most school hours…and will be able to discuss work-related topics of his interest with someone of the same age.

Shared interest in the vocational area of study is framed by the time and space invested in forming social bonds. This interest concerns both courses and professional goals. The difference identified in social capital development through academic education and vocational education suggests that vocational students may assume responsibilities which are not ascribed to academic students, such as the responsibility for employment. The creation of social bonds may trigger the need for commitment to the area of study. Christos affirms that his students tend to identify themselves with their specialty: "The electricians that is us….And they are happy about that and feel that they belong to that, let's say, and are part of it. They advertise it". An enhanced sense of belonging obviously makes students feel satisfied and fulfilled, feelings embedded in social cohesion (see Chapter 1).

The second social setting is the vocational school itself. The location of the school can contribute to social bonding and the creation of social capital; students usually attend the local school and get to know each other in the neighbourhood. Artemis states that "because we are a neighbourhood, more generally, even if they're not in the same gymnasium, they more or less know each other from the neighbourhood". She uses the phrase *microcosm of the school* to acknowledge the role of the school in the process of socialisation to society: it embodies elements and practices which define the society that surrounds it. Along the same lines, Chrysa echoes Coleman (1988) and his argument that the school is a community. In contrast to Christos, she insists that students may develop a professional identity but not necessarily a sense of belonging. Given that Christos delivers courses with strong professional rights, the development of a sense of belonging may be determined by the ability to secure employment. She clarifies, however, that the vocational school can feel like a community defined by diversity and respect:

We are overall trying, what we call, to feel like a small community. Not to have that, to distinguish some groups because of specific characteristics they may have…We are overall trying as a school unit…to overcome them and to overcome them all together.

Nikolas takes the argument a step further to discuss the perceived downside of achieving a sense of belonging to a community. He suggests that there are times when the need to belong to a community becomes stronger than the need to pursue individual wishes and goals. When he discusses vocational students who start to perform well academically, he states the following:

There is the situation where some of them suddenly take a step towards spreading their wings and escaping failure, and then, because this is the only place where they have felt accepted, going back for they feel that if they succeed, they will be alone here.

This statement can contribute to a better understanding of the impact of rejection on young people, particularly vocational students. They may have already experienced some form of exclusion, be it from the society that surrounds them or the academic schools they attended in the early stages of education. The vocational environment would offer them a sense of acceptance (as they are) and belonging. Yet their sense of self may not be strong enough to support big dreams. The moment they are about to excel, they *go back* to what they are used to. They may fear to experience success for the first time in their life or feel that they will be left *alone* and hence experience further rejection. The points raised by Nicolas call for further research and reveal the need to explore the implications of working towards acceptance and belonging for vocational students.

Nine teachers in **England** similarly indicate that vocational students can build social bonds on the basis of a common theme. What brings them closer together is a common interest or a common goal related to their vocational course. Though they tend to come from diverse backgrounds, they discover a common theme to share which, in turn, enables them to get to know and understand each other better. Academic education remains a steady point of reference.

Sharing a common theme emerges as a contributing factor to creating social bonds in vocational education. The common theme may be translated into a shared interest in the subject area or related activities such as computer games. Hope

emphasises that what brings her students together is a common interest in Hairdressing, which obviously transcends their background:

> We all have one thing in common, we will sit down and talk to anybody because they all love Hairdressing, they don't care about what anybody is. So we have this inherent…tolerance, if you like, of everybody...It is a bit like the arts; it is a place where traditionally people could hide a bit.

The analogy she draws between the arts and Hairdressing highlights the creative aspect of her subject area and directs attention to her students' need to experience a sense of belonging (to the community of hairdressing) and safety (to hide a bit). The need for safety is interpreted as a sign of awareness of wider assumptions about vocational education and failure of its students to get included in academic education. Vocational education would provide them with an emotionally safe environment where they can accept themselves as they are, embrace diversity and tolerate differences. The sense of belonging can be supported by a common interest in both the content and outcome of learning. Alexa states that her students, "they are all heading towards the same goal and the same theme….And it may be in slightly different ways". These ways may lead to relevant higher studies or immediate employment.

Teachers who deliver courses related to child studies and social care discuss in some detail the teaching strategy they use in the classroom to facilitate student grouping and bonding. They tend to mix and match their students, a strategy which encourages them to achieve solidarity and social capital. Coleman asserts that social capital "inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors (p. S98). In the structure of peer relationships in the classroom, social capital development would be based on understanding, sharing individual capital and supporting each other. Fran below the process she follows:

> I tend to mix the tables so that students who are [not audible] can help the ones with ideas for their assignments and for practical things. Who aren't as academic if you like….So it is about sharing skills and knowledge and empathising.

To strengthen bonding among her students, Fran uses team building techniques: "If I think the group isn't cohesive, I will stop classes and do other activities. Getting to know each other activities again, and then activities where they will have to share". If the microcosm of the school reflects the organisation of society, then students who

support cohesion in a group get prepared to act accordingly outside the school. Adam uses discipline techniques to ensure that his students find their place in the classroom: "I do lots of disciplinaries….because of that, they get on better as a student group, and they get to know one another, and they gel better". When students conform to norms about their behaviour (see Coleman, 1988), they would support cohesion in and outside the classroom. Differences in the choice of technique to promote group cohesion may be attributed to gender: male teachers would discipline and female teachers would nurture understanding.

Academic education emerges as a point of reference. Clive insists that it is easier for vocational rather than academic students to form a cohesive group of learners. A possible explanation lies in the fact that they have more opportunities to bond in college:

> Because the vocational course tends to be in one subject area, so it is the same teaching team, same area of the college…, and it is the same group of people who spend, you know, all that time together..., I think that social bonding happens a lot quicker and easier.

Clive touches upon the role of colleges in socialisation and social capital. Students would acquire a sense of being part of their college community when they share time, space and interests. What he is suggesting is that though vocational students tend to come from diverse backgrounds, they can discover similarities in vocational education and bridge any differences. As Putnam explains (2000), "bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity" (p. 23), which embrace diversity. Along the same lines with Clive, Daisy states that vocational students have more opportunities to group and bond: "You get far more team building in a vocational course than you are doing in a purely academic A-level course". Both Clive and Daisy teach BTEC and A-level courses. One may wonder what the implications of team building for young people are; whether vocational students can aim high and excel or need to compromise.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, it is obvious from the findings that vocational education is viewed as a means of promoting social bonding through a common theme. In other words, participant teachers support Putnam's (2000) approach to social capital development based on similarities. Sharing resources such as time, space and interests would enable students to get to know each other better, establish some common understanding and develop a sense of belonging to a (student) group or (school) community. In the case of Greece, the vocational specialty and the vocational

school itself delineate the social settings where social bonding takes place. Emphasis placed on the role of the specialty and the school in socialising and belonging stem from the organisation of the education system: distinct learning pathways have been allocated to distinct schools at upper secondary level. In the case of England, the focus of discussion lies on the content (i.e., being interested in the subject matter) and outcome (i.e., pursuing higher studies) of learning. This is associated with the fact that various learning pathways are usually delivered in the same educational institution. Though the social aspect of learning has not been identified in the policy documents under study, participant teachers highlight the opportunity for vocational students to create social ties, learn to coexist with others and hence contribute to social cohesion.

7.3 Social roles in vocational education

It is obvious from the findings that social interaction between teachers and students in vocational education is considered central to students' preparation for life. Some teachers portray this interaction as a process which facilitates students to enhance their human capital through social capital and hence get better prepared for the labour market. In this case, teachers and students would assume roles which are traditionally ascribed to the labour market. Some describe this interaction as a process which balances the development of human capital (for employment) and social capital (for social ties). These teachers confirm that the vocational teacher assumes the dual role of the teacher and the worker who has relevant industry experience and interacts with students in social settings which "span the worlds of work and of education" (Lucas et al., 2012, p. 99). Social roles assumed by teachers and students in vocational education will be explored next.

7.3.1 Roles resembling the world of work

Three teachers in **Greece** appear to differentiate themselves from their colleagues in terms of their perceptions of the social roles teachers and students play in vocational education. These are Ikaros, Loukas and Panos, who define vocational education as preparation for the labour market. Though they may not directly indicate that interaction between teachers and students resembles practices developed in the world of work, they point to aspects of the working environment which tend to be integrated into the classroom environment. As such, I decided to include their responses in this group.

Ikaros, who has long experience of the workplace, highlights the importance for teachers to possess and share workplace experience with their students. He reveals part

of his perception of the social role of the vocational teacher when he draws a parallel between personnel training and teacher training:

> Shouldn't I be trained on the new? Just as each company does which receives new products and makes, trains its technicians, its new personnel….We are talking about modern specialties, [vocational education] should follow developments. And a teacher who is out of date, well, he may turn education out of date.

Along the same lines with Schultz (1963) and Becker (1993) highlighting similarities between the school and the business organisation, Ikaros compares his role as a teacher with the role of a company executive. He proposes that teachers should follow some workplace practices, in order to better prepare their students for the reality of the labour market. This preparation includes readiness to assume responsibilities in life, as reflected in the following advice to students: "Tomorrow you will enter the world, you won't be a student for life". The lack of response implies that they do not have any expectations from their teachers: "Only they don't react...That is the problem". Therefore, Ikaros views a contributing role for the vocational teacher to the enhancement of individual human capital through social capital development. Students are thus expected to prepare for life and assume responsibilities on the basis of employment. The fact that they do not respond to such an expectation may reveal the impact of the economic crisis on young people: they see no future.

Like Ikaros, Loukas highlights the importance for teachers to ensure that their students are well-prepared for the workplace: "We need to nurture and instil in the student [*mathitis*] those needs created by working conditions, in particular, by the sector of the economy which is the most crucial sector". In doing so, he signals the importance of the economy for society. Panos reflects on the process of his appointment to a vocational school to state that initially, he would view his students as a team of employees he was requested to manage. He had just left the industry to enter the world of education and felt comfortable using workplace practices. He thus viewed his role as that of the facilitator of student progression into employment. In the course of time, that viewpoint would be replaced by disappointment because students would not respond to his practices.

Six teachers in **England** agree that the social roles assumed by teachers and students in vocational education resemble those developed in the world of work. Perceived difference in the number of responses by participant teachers in Greece and

England may be attributed to the difference in the prevailing logic of vocational education in each country: educational and employment/market respectively (see Iannelli & Raffe, 2007; Preston & Green, 2008). In a learning environment which resembles the world of work, teachers and students tend to have clear expectations from each other. Students are expected to adopt industry-specific rules and procedures, whilst teachers are expected to assist them in getting qualified for the occupation of choice.

Findings show that vocational teachers tend to have experience of the workplace, which they consider a useful tool in preparing students for the labour market. Floyd, who followed an industry-related learning pathway, clarifies that "it is up to us to make them industry-aware and to go for the choices and take the chances whatever their career path might throw at them in the future". Teachers and students would share resources to ensure that students are ready for the labour market. He implies that teachers can play a crucial role in students' development of cultural capital when they raise student awareness of how the industry operates and hence how students need to behave: "I don't think that I would be doing the students any favours if I painted a rosy picture about industry being fantastic". In comparison with Greece, students are similarly expected to develop their individual capital through social interaction with teachers. Dylan has a similar viewpoint:

> The rules we have in the workshop and the procedures we have in the workshop are taken from industry so that the environment they learn in is as close as we can make it to the environment they would work in afterwards.

Therefore, teachers and students would assume distinct social roles in vocational preparation. Students would expect their teachers to assist them in acquiring the qualifications required to enter the industry of their choice; in Ben's words, "getting that piece of paper and using it as a means to get a job".

As they grow and mature in vocational education, students would be expected to enter into an adult-to-adult interaction with their teachers. Clive implies that his experience of the workplace has influenced the way he interacts with his students:

> I always treat them as young adults. In fact, what I tend to do is treat them the same way I used to treat the staff who worked for me when I was in industry….I expect them to behave in that mature way.

This means that vocational students are ascribed the role of the trainee employee rather than that of the student-learner. Along the same lines with Clive, Beth acknowledges that she would treat her staff and students in the same manner. She clarifies, however, that teachers could assume a wide range of roles, in order to assist their students in preparing for life through their studies: "I think we are a little bit of everything, we become their parents, we become their social workers, we become their friends, we become their tutor...while maintaining that professionalism". This clarification may stem from the fact that some of Beth's students come from vulnerable backgrounds and have learning needs which are not strictly associated with preparation for the workplace. Furthermore, gender may affect viewpoints on the social interaction between teachers and students. If Beth identifies a nurturing element in the complex role of the vocational teacher, Floyd indicates the opposite: "we need to be very strict and focussed on what we are doing really".

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, findings from the interview data show that both teachers and students integrate elements from the world of work into the interaction between them; this becomes more evident in the case of England. In this light, teachers would assume the role of the supervisor to raise their students' awareness of the workplace, in order to address and conform to relevant needs. In the case of Greece, there are fewer indications that teachers would adopt some workplace practices with the intention to prepare students for real-life working conditions. On the other side, students may not have clear expectations from their teachers. This may pertain to feelings of insecurity about their future. In the case of England, it is explicitly articulated that teachers would enter into an adult-to-adult interaction with their students, thus preparing them for their obligations and rights (to choices and chances) in life. This tendency may stem from the fact that vocational education in England promotes the market model (Preston & Green, 2008). Students would have specific expectations from their teachers: they expect support to obtain the qualifications required for the intended industry. In times of economic crisis, reciprocity in terms of roles and expectations may be affected. Where there is a feeling of hopelessness on the part of the students or the vocational pathway is viewed as a dead end, then students may not interact with their teachers in a constructive way; they may not respond to their expectations. If the feeling of hopelessness defines young people in times of crisis, one may then wonder how they will progress and achieve in the world of adults.

7.3.2 Roles blending the worlds of education and work

The majority of teachers in **Greece** (eleven) generally avoid comparing the vocational school with the working environment, at least, explicitly. They acknowledge, however, the dual role of the vocational teacher and the expectation to assist their students in both personal and professional development. The role of the academic teacher emerges as a point of reference in the discussion of the social roles of teachers and students in vocational education. Participant teachers draw attention to their envisaged role (by students) in the learning process and the impact of proximity on the social interaction between teachers and students.

Regarding their role in the learning process, teachers indicate that students generally expect them to master their subject matter, in order to facilitate learning. Christos expresses the belief that "they see me as their facilitator at this stage of their life. He can guide them, give them some advice and teach them some things as well". Facilitating learning would entail guidance on future career plans and the transmission of knowledge relevant to their subject matter and life, thus blending the worlds of work and education. Minos explains that as a teacher, "you don't leave them too loose nor are you too strict. You need to find the golden section to make them listen to you". He thus adopts a more traditional approach to social interaction in the classroom (or workshop) where he applies strategies traditionally developed in academic education and targeted at making students disciplined. Minos, again, stresses that though he avoids considering his students potential workers, they may do so for themselves: "They see themselves in the workshop as a worker as well, and not only as a student". These students would then perceive the learning environment as a simulated working environment where they can prepare for the social role of the employee supported by the role of the learner.

Regarding proximity in social interaction, findings show that vocational students need and appreciate respect shared with their teachers; they need reciprocal respect. In certain cases, the proximity is such that the (vocational) school environment may be perceived as extension of the family environment. Bela asserts that "many students [*paidia*] see us as family. That is, they want you to listen to their problems," thus retaining that proximity which tends to underpin the family environment. The fact that they share their problems with their teachers means that they trust them enough to open up to them. They would then achieve connectedness on the basis of trust (see Putnam, 2000). Gender does not affect perceptions of proximity. Dimos confirms proximity in vocational education when he observes that the teacher, "he sits there with him [the student] and he is near him." Artemis compares the vocational with the academic

context of interaction to conclude that it is easier to develop proximity in vocational education:

> Think about a teacher at his desk teaching and a teacher over the car, having the engine [hood] open and together with the student they are looking to see what may be wrong. It is a completely different relationship. So, they feel closer to teachers, especially those of technical specialties.

She indicates that the social distance is smaller because of the nature of vocational education: teachers and students work together, standing next to each other in the social setting of the workshop. This indication is in line with the argument that where teachers and students cooperate and achieve proximity in the learning setting, students would engage in learning (Misbah et al. 2015), thus contributing to the development of relationships.

The three participant teachers who deliver courses in evening schools acknowledge that they interact with students who generally tend to share lack of confidence in their abilities. In this light, teachers aim to motivate and encourage them to complete their studies and pursue relevant wishes. Under the influence of the economic crisis, Orestes offers his students words of encouragement for the future. He does his best to convince them that they will not remain unemployed (those who are) because there will be opportunities in the future. Though their discussion revolves around (un)employment, there is a nurturing element in the role assumed by Orestes. Furthermore, such a conviction reveals that in contemporary society, hope for life and the future is determined by the state of employment. Along with encouragement, students need to be validated for who they are and who they wish to be. Fanis comments on that: "I think that they seek some acceptance. That is what I understand. They seek their work to be recognised". Having experienced some form of exclusion in the past, they now need to experience feelings which foster social cohesion: acceptance and validation.

Eight teachers in **England** indicate that the social interaction between vocational teachers and students in colleges entails elements which underpin the interaction in the worlds of both education and work. The college environment is depicted as a field of social action independent from the school and the working environment, where students are expected to develop an independent disposition to learning and work. In this learning environment, teachers are expected to facilitate preparation of students for life

in a consistent and caring way. Along with raising industry-awareness, it is considered important to assist them in developing as learners and individuals.

Teachers acknowledge that the college environment is different from both the (lower secondary) school and the working environment; the same applies to the roles teachers and students assume when they interact with each other. Compared with the school environment, the teaching and learning process delivered in college is expected to encourage vocational students to assume responsibility for their own learning, thus developing into independent learners. Celia describes the process as follows: "The learning is a lot different than at school...they teach something, they do it. Where here…I would say that we give them the bones and they put the meat on it". Compared with the working environment, students are expected to work towards getting included in the workplace and mature through vocational preparation. At the same time, however, they are learners who receive education. Elinor explains what vocational preparation involves:

> How to interact with each other formally and how to be professional with each other. Those things they obviously learn inside the classroom…To start with, they're not so professional, but towards the end they become more professional and more mature.

On the other side, Greta specifies that learning underpins the college environment: "whilst we try and say it is a realistic working environment, it is a learning environment". In other words, teachers and students integrate into their practice elements from the worlds of education and work.

In the college environment, teachers are expected to master their subject matter and facilitate the learning process. They would set clear boundaries and support their students to grow and mature. Adam highlights the importance of being consistent for students to develop as learners and individuals: "we are always firm and we discipline when necessary. We are giving them, I suppose, in a way, a security, they know what to expect when they are here, and so they get that safety". Developing a sense of safety is considered a key element in the promotion of social cohesion. What Adam is suggesting in this direction is that the feeling of safety can be safeguarded when individuals follow set boundaries; set social norms. Like Clive, Alexa affirms that vocational teachers have experience of the workplace, which may affect the way they treat their students:

> I think we all have that aspect to us anyway, the sort of caring and nurturing, or have you, because we have all worked with children and we tend to treat our students that way as well. And we do get some very good results doing that.

If Clive places emphasis on professional development of students (treating them as members of staff), Alexa sounds mainly interested in their personal (or social) development. As such, her colleagues and she follow a caring and nurturing approach. This difference in perception may stem from differences in the nature of the subject matters they deliver (machinery-based and human care respectively).

A nurturing environment is projected as a place where students may view their teachers as part of the extended family. They may trust their teachers the way they trust their family. On the other side, they may expect their teachers to do things for them. Elinor provides a possible explanation as to why strong social ties could be developed in college: "They become family because, you know, having taught a student for four years, what are you expecting? Obviously you mean a lot to them and they mean a lot to you". She echoes Coleman (1988) and his argument that social ties and social capital can be developed when a social network (like the college) is defined by a degree of closure and hence its members share resources. The degree of closure could be so strong that the college environment feels like part of the family environment. On the other side, Greta points to the potential lack of maturity of students and the expectation to have teachers attend to their duties the way their family would have done.

> I think it very much depends on the family life that they have. Some come here expecting 'mother' – the tutor to run around and find everything that they need. And we have to teach them to work independently and...use their initiative.

If in Greece, students of all ages are viewed as *children* in need of some protection, in England, they are treated like young adults who need to demonstrate the ability to be independent and take initiatives.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, it is obvious that teachers and students tend to assume social roles which blend practices developed in the worlds of education and work. This tends to apply mainly to those who are on human care courses. Participant teachers acknowledge the dual role of the vocational teacher as a traditional teacher who delivers their subject matter and as a professional who shares with students their personal experience of the workplace. What is interesting is the fact

that though on the one hand, they support their students to prepare for the workplace, on the other hand, the social ties between teachers and students could be so strong that the vocational learning environment feels like part (or extension) of the family environment. Students would view their teachers as someone close enough to them to look like a parent, and teachers may then treat their students as someone who could be their child. This may pertain to an identified need of vocational students to have a sense of belonging as well as the operation of the vocational classroom and workshop: there can be greater proximity between teachers and students.

Teachers in Greece focus on the proximity reached between vocational teachers and students mainly in the social setting of the workshop; the distance between them is literally and metaphorically smaller than the respective in academic education. There is a line of argument that in the learning settings where teachers decide to collaborate with their students, they can contribute to proximity and student engagement in learning (see Misbah et al., 2015). This proximity would then facilitate the development of social bonds and ties. Teachers in England place emphasis on the differences of the college environment to the school and the working environment, to point out that vocational students (as college students) start to assume responsibility for their learning and to develop behaviour suitable for the workplace. Therefore, teaching responsibility forms part of the role of and expectation for the vocational teacher. Perceived different focus of interest may pertain to differences in the organisation of the education system: the vocational school is part of schooling in Greece, whilst the college is considered a transition stage between schooling and work in England.

7.4 Vocational education as a means of inclusion in society

Shavit and Müller (2000) acknowledge the line of argument that vocational education can play a positive role "in shaping the life chances of its graduates" (p. 437). It can therefore enable vocational students to get included in society and turn chances into outcomes. In the English policy context, these chances are mainly associated with the development of social capital on the basis of human capital and cover the following: progression into work, apprenticeships, and further and higher education. With the exception of apprenticeships, the same benefits are delineated in the Greek policy context. Findings from the interview data make it obvious that the acquisition of human capital determines the development of social capital. In other words, the state and status of employment associated with vocational education determines the way students perceive themselves, place themselves in society and relate to others. In broad terms,

participant teachers in Greece and England identify three overlapping aspects of the social role of vocational education: (a) it can support students to find a positive destination in life; (b) it can support them to have a realistic view of life; (c) it can support them to recognise their own value.

7.4.1 Finding a positive destination in life

In **Greece**, teachers agree that students who may have experienced some form of exclusion in their life have the opportunity to get included in society through vocational education. Finding a positive destination in life means having the opportunity to make dreams of a better life, assume an active role in society, and make a positive contribution. The economic crisis may have triggered feelings of insecurity about the future; at the same time, it has contributed to an initial appreciation of the value of vocational education.

Some teachers underline the fact that vocational students may carry negative feelings about themselves which stem from academic failure in earlier stages of education and may be related to some form of social exclusion. Vocational education could offer them a learning environment to explore their talents and skills, identify what they are good at and create a meaningful destination for themselves. Artemis highlights the significance of having the dream of a better life and working towards its fulfilment. She considers such a possibility a contributing factor to social cohesion:

> If you take that dream away from people, that possibility…, there can be no social cohesion. With vocational education, yes, you offer students [*paidia*] this possibility to think that, "What will I do? What do I like to do? And with what I like to do, I will achieve something better in my life".

For Fanis, a meaningful destination indicates that vocational students would become active members of society, thus addressing possible feelings of social exclusion: "Students [*paidia*] avoid remaining at the margins of society". He considers part-time employment (relevant to vocational studies) an important means of surviving a period of economic crisis: "Both emotional and financial support". He thus acknowledges the role of employment in the way people perceive themselves and relate to others; lack of employment may affect human support and lead to conscious marginalisation.

Finding a positive destination would entail making a positive contribution to society. Vocational students are ready to achieve that contribution because they are

ready to perform their trade, enter the labour market and contribute their qualifications to society. The ability to be creative is associated with the ability to recognise one's usefulness and subsequently one's place in society. Minos explains that when "you offer a person the opportunity to do something creative, I think that this person is already ready to integrate into society. They are already integrated". Loukas draws upon his subject matter (and the work of Frederick Taylor) to state that "the science of Economics creates the conditions for social cohesion of individuals in the working environment". In this light, readiness for employment is viewed as a condition for inclusion in a society where "one individual complements the other". This is in line with Durkheim's argument that the division of labour in society supports organic solidarity as the glue that keeps a society together (Lukes, 1973). Social inclusion would be achieved when accumulated resources are shared to benefit at an individual (employability) and collective (sustainability) level.

Some teachers state that there may be a change in the culture of education due to the economic crisis. Chrysa indicates that wider assumptions about vocational education are revisited in an attempt to address the crisis:

> Now to have a child who is a scientist in not everything in the Greek society as it was in previous years. Now…to have a child who can support himself and if he can the rest of the family as well is everything.

Now, there may be a wider initial attempt to identify the positive in vocational education. Alternatively, in times of economic crisis, individuals may have more *practical* dreams and future goals which converge at survival. Dimos shares Chrysa's opinion in society appreciating individuals who can support themselves and their families. He asserts that vocational students can successfully assume such a role (and responsibility): "I think that now we are all looking for a composed individual with some structure, who can make some living to support his family….as a professional why shouldn't he be accepted by wider society?" Acceptability is intertwined with usefulness when he claims that a technician or worker "who graduates from these [vocational] schools, we all need in our homes….How much can society change, the basic structures of society?" By drawing attention to structural factors he frames the field of action for a positive destination.

In **England**, teachers define positive destination as the process of discovering and adding some meaning to life. When students set a destination, they are anticipated to explore their strengths (and limitations) to find where they can perform well. They

can use their qualifications to make a positive contribution to society. They can exit poverty and enter a new and improved state of life. Any positive outcome is expected to stem from individual effort and motivation.

Vocational education emerges as a learning environment where students can find a route to employment and subsequently a meaningful destination in life. For Ben, this destination evolves through a chain of consecutive actions:

> [Vocational education] provides some meaningful usefulness for themselves, if you like, within society….So if they get an apprenticeship, that means they are getting paid, obviously they have got income coming in, then they will want sort of family life after that, I would have thought.

Vocational qualifications would then enable young people to become included in other aspects of life. Dylan shares observation with Ben when he claims that students can find a "positive destination in the sense of you [the teacher] want the student to go somewhere where they can progress in life," thus turning their vocational studies into a vehicle to get included in society. Finding a destination in life may entail vocational students making a useful contribution to society. Like Dimos, Hope asserts that all individuals have an important and useful role to play in society, regardless of their educational background and nature of work:

> We all need a plumber in our life, we all need an electrician in our life and a builder, we all want to look special and feel fantastic and have our hair cut, so therefore it is just as valuable as when we need the doctor or a solicitor.

Therefore, there is a place for every individual to fill in society; appreciating all places may contribute to the fostering of a cohesive society.

A positive destination may include an entry route into an occupation with prospects and exit from deprivation, including unemployment and poverty. According to Beth, vocational education can support students to improve their life and "break out of some of the deprivation circles that they are in. Because we have got students that are maybe third generation of unemployed". Acquiring vocational qualifications would then offer students the opportunity to improve their life through education. Edan takes the argument a step further to consider the impact of being employed on the back of vocational qualifications on wider society: "if they're not getting benefits, that surely has a positive impact on the whole picture". Resources invested in such benefits may

then be allocated to cover other needs of a society. On the other side, possible feelings of dependency may give way to independence and the ability to take initiatives.

In a cohesive society, progress in life would be determined by individual effort and motivation. Alexa states that, "You have to work at things if you really want something". The individual therefore has the power to turn qualifications into intended outcomes. Along the same lines, Daisy indicates that individuals have the ability to choose how they use their formal qualifications, in order to find a place in society: "we can all have a Level 3 qualification. But what we choose to do with it, you will choose where your place in society will be". If in Greece teachers feel that finding one's place in life depends on the function of the state to a great extent, in England there is great belief in the power of the individual to shape their future. Floyd draws upon personal experience to imply a connection between developing a sense of personal utility (contributing to society) and feeling included in society (being settled):

> Most people that I have associated with within my working life are all from vocational courses and they have done, you know, obviously different standards. I mean, what their own drive and ambition are. But…they are settled in life and they feel like they are contributing to the wider population and the community.

A destination supported by hard work and motivation emerges as central to social inclusion and cohesion.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers indicate that vocational students could find a positive destination through vocational education and hence add more meaning to their life. They would get included in society by assuming a useful social role leading to some positive contribution to society. If teachers in England perceive students' place in society as the outcome of individual effort and motivation, teachers in Greece agree that structural factors may determine that place. A possible explanation lies in the assumptions about the role of the state in (vocational) education. Where the state is attributed a more active and protective role, as in Greece, structural factors are expected to influence the place of the individual student in society. Where the state shares power with the market, as in England, the individual student is expected to determine their place in society. In the case of Greece, the economic crisis steadily frames teachers' perceptions of the social role of vocational education. It is anticipated to contribute to social inclusion through part-time employment which could, in turn, secure some financial and emotional stability. In the case of England, the destination of

vocational students is approached as a chain of consecutive actions, starting from education and employment. This approach may pertain to the perceived economic stability of the country and the ability to plan ahead.

7.4.2 Having a realistic view of life

Five teachers in **Greece** indicate that vocational education enables students to acquire a realistic view of life. Academic students emerge as a point of comparison leading to the observation that vocational students become more aware of everyday life on the one hand, and do not view life through rose-tilted glasses on the other.

Andreas and Christos, among the younger teachers interviewed in Greece, discuss how vocational students get educated on aspects of real life (wider than school life). Andreas implies that vocational education delivered in the vocational school could offer students a learning environment to explore their outlook on life: "Its objective is to offer qualifications both personal and cognitive, in order for students to change both their attitudes towards social phenomena and their knowledge and skills, in order to become better in the future". By strengthening their social personal as well as cognitive development, they would become better individuals and professionals, and subsequently relate better to others. Christos indicates that vocational students could explore aspects of real life because the vocational school offers them the possibility to interact with a large number of teachers and students who are engaged in a large number of specialties:

> Because here many specialties coexist, many people by specialty, as it will be outside, tomorrow. That is, if it happens here in this way, which I think that it does, tomorrow as well it will happen in a nice and good way outside…collaboration and communication and coexistence.

He sounds positive about the contributing (but not determining) role of vocational education in social inclusion and cohesion. Along the same lines, Panos claims that the vocational school is a *mosaic* of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, thus implying that vocational students can get a glimpse of real life.

Artemis and Kosmas affirm that vocational students develop a realistic view on life. According to Artemis, vocational students can achieve that in two ways. The first is through interaction with their vocational teachers who tend to have workplace experience and hence know how the labour market operates. The second is through their interaction with fellow students and the practice of specific social skills "because the context may be slightly more delinquent," indicating that there may be students with

behavioural problems. Compared to academic students, vocational students "have a view on and understanding of what is happening around them, better or closer to reality". Kosmas shares Artemis' opinion in students being closer to reality. He stresses that though academic students may know how to use gadgets, they do not know how to carry out basic home maintenance tasks. They both agree that the vocational qualifications would enable students to get included in society even in times of economic crisis. If Artemis focusses on the role of the individual to emphasise that the formal qualification, "this alone is not enough. They should try themselves," Kosmas highlights the role of a society in inclusion and cohesion:

> What they will do after and how they will enter and what they will do, that depends on society and the system that exists. That is, now the crisis has brought us back...We prepare the same students....They need to have the system fixed.

What he is suggesting is that structural factors affect the way vocational students find their place in society and reality.

Four teachers in **England** similarly share the assumption that vocational education can support its students to experience aspects of real life (life outside school) and achieve learning wider than preparation for working life. Teachers' experience of the wider world, the learning content of vocational courses (and study programmes) as well as the capacity of a college emerge as contributing factors to the development of a realistic view of life.

Vocational education is understood to assist students in learning how to coexist with people from diverse backgrounds. Fran states that "students come in and they might have a fixed view of the world as it is". She refers to courses on equality and diversity to imply that they can explore their viewpoints and develop a wider view of life: "Well, you know, because I usually teach equality and diversity, I have seen a shift. So more acceptance and more knowledge of other cultures". Along the same lines, Elinor clarifies that "the course content of the BTEC vocational courses are also designed in a way where students are expected to, as well as encouraged to, take interest into other diverse backgrounds". Preparation for real life through vocational studies would therefore enable students to relate to others in a more considerate way; hence they would contribute to social cohesion.

Having a realistic view of life may entail experiencing aspects of life students have not been familiar with; in this way, they could develop realistic life aspirations. As Beth points out:

> If we try and take them out of the comfort zones, get them to experience things that they haven't necessarily experienced. And that's not just here and these facilities, it is the trips and the visits and the guest speakers that we have done.

One may wonder whether awareness of the wider world could contribute to aspirations wider than the comfort zones. In the context of human care courses, students could prepare for roles and responsibilities which define the world of adults. Fran explains that students who may leave education early or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds can learn to make responsible choices for members of their own family: "Being able to care for children. Knowing how to promote education for their own children." In other words, even if they do not use their vocational qualifications to enhance economic security, they can still use the acquired knowledge to improve their living conditions and safeguard human security.

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers generally agree that vocational students can develop a realistic view of life because they get educated on aspects of real life, broadly defined as life outside school or college. They would therefore find their place in society by becoming aware of reality and the world of adults. Teachers in Greece expect the adoption of a realistic view of life to enable students to improve themselves as a person and a professional. The possibility to interact with teachers and peers from a wide range of specialties can assist them in becoming familiar with diverse social settings. Teachers in England stress that students have the opportunity to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and subsequently get closer to reality. The learning content can offer them the possibility to explore personal opinions, in order to develop a wider outlook on life and prepare for roles associated with the world of adults.

7.4.3 Recognising one's value

Five teachers in **Greece** agree that vocational education does or may function as a learning environment where students recognise their value as individuals and subsequently relate better to others. They imply that it is equally important with the possession of knowledge and skills for young people to value themselves; this would

facilitate the process of getting included in society. What they have in common is teaching experience in evening schools or an interest in sociology; among them is Bela, one of the three female participant teachers.

Andreas and Fanis refer to the possibility of vocational students being aware of and affected by wider assumptions about vocational education. Andreas affirms that any feelings of rejection from earlier stages of formal education could be overcome in vocational education. Developing a sense of belonging could assist students in raising their self-esteem: "Here they function as part of the team, as equal to the rest of their fellow students. They don't feel isolated, they don't feel lesser, they don't feel worse". What Andreas implies is that it is easier for young people to create social ties (and social capital) when there is a certain degree of closure (see Coleman, 1988). For vocational students, this degree may be determined by the feeling of rejection from compulsory education. Feeling equal to others would facilitate the process of being included in a society. If policy initiatives associate self-esteem with the accumulation of knowledge (see MoELLRA, 2011), Andreas relates it to the state of feeling on a par with others. Fanis touches upon the impact of the experience of social exclusion on how his students tend to perceive themselves. He explains that in the context of vocational education, they would strengthen belief in themselves through their interaction with their teachers and fellow students: "And I think that they find the way through collaboration, through contacts, and they improve their position. In the labour market. That is, they start to believe in themselves. And within society". Believing in themselves indicates that students start to recognise their own value, independent from employment. When they raise their self-esteem, then they can work on accomplishing targeted goals which would improve the conditions at work and in social life.

Orestes draws upon his study of sociology to explain how vocational education could contribute to the creation of a more cohesive society; recognising one's value emerges as the stepping stone. He states that when students work towards fulfilling their wishes, "they build confidence, get to know themselves and their abilities which…they may have thought that they didn't possess". In other words, they would feel validated. Changing the way they perceive themselves would then change the way they relate to others and subsequently the way they get included in society: feeling on a par or not. This is reflected in the statement below, where Orestes touches upon the social and emotional outcomes of vocational education:

When the student thinks that society itself hasn't pushed him to the margins, treats him as an equal, integrated member and so it offers him the opportunity to study and acquire formal qualifications he wouldn't dream of, I think that would contribute to social cohesion.

Nikolas takes the argument further to delineate the context of action. Taking into consideration that vocational students may have failed the academic system, vocational education would offer them the possibility to feel equal to academic students by sharing the social role of the upper secondary student. He sounds concerned as to how they can progress into society: "The problem, however, that vocational education hasn't resolved is what follows after three years". The issue of concern therefore relates to whether vocational students can preserve the feeling of being on a par with others when they leave formal education.

Four Teachers in **England** affirm that vocational education provides students with a learning environment where they can address any issues with self-esteem. These issues may stem from past unhappy school experiences and a lack of sense of achievement. Vocational education would enable students to identify with others (teachers and peers) and enter society feeling equal.

Teachers assert that students who enrol in college to do a vocational course may have low self-esteem and confidence, to the extent that they may be experiencing feelings of failure. As indicated earlier, negative learning experiences acquired in lower secondary education may have triggered feelings of low self-perception. Adam confirms that "a lot of them have failed in school, and so they come to us with low self-confidence, low self-esteem". Reflecting on the college performance of a particular student with learning difficulties, Clive reveals that they would blame themselves for their poor school performance to the point that they would consider themselves *not worthy* of progressing and achieving; in other words, they would find it difficult to recognise their own value.

During their college studies, students have the opportunity to turn negative dispositions to learning into a positive life experience. The content of vocational courses can contribute to this direction. Teachers delivering human care courses discuss the impact of teaching and learning on students raising their self-esteem. The process of working with others and engaging in reflective practice can assist students in building up their confidence and self-esteem. To give an example, Celia underlines the fact that there are students "progressing within their vocational areas, gaining experience, gaining more self-esteem, positive to the learning, and think, 'Yes, I can actually

achieve that'''. Developing a sense of achievement may then lead students to identifying and accepting their value.

Adam and Alexa both highlight the role of the vocational teacher in nurturing students' self-esteem and feelings of equality. Adam stresses that teachers would support students to address personal issues related to low self-esteem before considering the academic side of education and learning. What Adam is suggesting is that the way students perceive themselves may affect their disposition to learning rather than the opposite. Students are expected to leave college feeling equal to others or as he puts it, "they don't feel like they are down here in society". He appears to agree with Andreas and the observation that the state of feeling equal could facilitate inclusion in society. Alexa underlines the fact that vocational students can learn to appreciate their own value:

> They have come to us with no self-respect or self-esteem, and they have left us knowing they are valuable people. So we must have done something right along the way to make them feel they are of value and to respect themselves, and what have you, after two or three years.

If Adam and Alexa imply that social inclusion depends on the individual, Celia indicates that it is determined in terms of both the individual and society. She discusses the way people relate to each other to stress that it depends on the behaviour of each individual and their interaction with others: "I think that depends on others and actually I think it depends on that individual, as an individual".

Comparing the cases of Greece and England, participant teachers indicate that vocational students have the opportunity to recognise their value as a human being, a feeling which could facilitate the process of inclusion in society and evidence the existence of social cohesion. The state of feeling on a par with others emerges as a condition for social cohesion. Teachers in Greece project vocational education as a learning environment where students could develop a sense of belonging, feel on the par with others, and start to believe in themselves. This could be achieved through interaction with teachers and peers. Teachers in England similarly agree that vocational students may have issues with self-esteem and confidence. Tools such as reflective practice, may enable them to realise that they can achieve and progress in life. A sense of achievement could contribute to self-esteem. As mentioned earlier, Colley, Chadderton and Nixon (2014) feel that the development of self-esteem on the basis of knowledge and skills may further expose the vulnerability of individuals and challenge

their confidence in themselves. What participant teachers are suggesting is that vocational education can support its students to recognise their inner value and build on that, regardless of the level or content of knowledge. This could be achieved in the context of social relationships and bonds.

7.5 Concluding

Findings from the interview data address the question of how vocational education is envisaged to support students to find their place in society. Three themes have emerged from data analysis which point to vocational education as a social unit, social roles in vocational education and vocational education as a means of inclusion in society. Teachers who deliver courses demanding knowledge of a technique indicate that vocational students can become socially competent on the basis of their human capital: develop a mindset which embodies collaboration and professionalism. If in Greece the focus of interest is on social responsibility, in England interest lies in accepting others as they are. Teachers who view similarities between academic education and vocational education touch upon the role of the school or college in social bonding and the creation of social capital on the basis of common interests or goals. Participant teachers recognise the dual role of the vocational teacher and its impact on social interaction (see Lucas et al., 2012). Where teachers focus on the role of the supervisor in the workplace, students tend to be treated like young adults and receive industry-specific preparation. Where there is interest in balancing anticipated roles, learning tends to be accomplished in the context of social relationships, targeted at personal and professional development. Such learning is envisaged to shape positive opportunities in life for vocational students (see Shavit & Müller, 2000). Some teachers underline that students could find a positive destination in life through vocational preparation and make some positive contribution to society. Some claim that students could develop a realistic view of life outside school or college. Becoming aware of reality could facilitate coexistence with others. Some assert that students could be included in society having recognised their inner value and accepted their right to feel on a par with others.

Chapter 8

The Value of Vocational Education in Times of Economic Crisis

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I have looked into issues which are related to the discussion of parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education and capture the essence of vocational education in times of economic crisis. Findings from both the documentary analysis and the interview data have unveiled perceptions of vocational education being widely valued as utilitarian and second class education. I decided to have a separate chapter on the value of vocational education in Greece and England with the intention to juxtapose findings from my two sources of evidence and further explore the essence of vocational education in times of economic crisis. Throughout their interview participant teachers sound deeply concerned about the perceived lack of parity of esteem and touch upon the potential impact on vocational students. By juxtaposing the dominant discourse of policy-makers with the less dominant discourse of teachers I have identified cultural differences between discourses.

8.2 Vocational education valued as utilitarian

The notion of parity of esteem (or equivalence) has a special place in the (dominant) policy discourse of vocational education. It encompasses assumptions about its image, perspectives on its intrinsic value and practices for its recognition in the labour market and society. Policy-makers argue for a utilitarian direction for vocational education. Widening participation in vocational education would therefore serve as an opportunity for more young people to acquire knowledge and skills to utilise for the growth and development of the economy and society. Participant teachers acknowledge the utilitarian direction, with some proposing that the same should apply for academic education.

Findings from the analysis of the selected education policy documents produced in Greece and England indicate that policy-makers ascribe a utilitarian direction to the provision of vocational education. As indicated earlier, academic education may be directed towards utility of academic knowledge through potential vocationalisation of secondary education (see Maclean & Pavlova, 2013). Yet this direction remains a policy priority for vocational education, particularly in times of economic crisis. Vocational education is envisaged to support its students to principally play a useful role in the

economy and society. They would acquire and enhance their human capital to invest it in the labour market and the society that surrounds them. Due to the longstanding tradition of academic education in Greece, emphasis is placed on becoming a useful member of the labour market and society through participation in higher education. Due to the highly industrialised nature of the economy in England, closer collaboration between vocational education and employers has been promoted throughout the period of time under study. Despite cultural differences to the vocational tradition in Greece and England, there are characteristics shared in common. This is interpreted as a deep interest in the development of human capital through education and training as a means of reaching economic growth and development, and recovering from the economic crisis.

Along the lines of the Copenhagen Process, vocational students in both countries under study have the opportunity to participate in higher education. It is expected that they would use the knowledge and skill acquired through higher education to make a contribution to the economy and society. Qualifications accrued through vocational education remain suitable for the performance of a particular occupation or more broadly for employment. Specialties and areas of study operating in vocational schools or colleges respectively are targeted at industry-specific qualifications which students could transfer to other related industries.

Findings from the interview data indicate that participant teachers generally recognise and accept the utilitarian direction to the provision of vocational education. They sound concerned about the low participation of young people in vocational education. Applying the utilitarian approach to other forms and types of education and learning may encourage them to take the vocational route to personal and professional development. The economic crisis frames perceptions of the direction for vocational education held mainly by teachers in Greece. To give an example, Loukas specifies that vocational students, "when they enter the labour market, they are equipped with all the necessary materials and qualifications, in order to cope with this difficult economic situation". Students thus develop human capital through vocational education which they can utilise to address challenges to the economy (as in unemployment) and society (as in social exclusion). They argue that they are better equipped than academic students and can thus be useful to themselves and to others. This may contribute to an understanding of why there is currently a greater interest in social networks: individuals can bring together skills and knowledge useful to each other and create common resources to share among them, and to address issues related to the economic crisis.

216

Participant teachers who support a more traditional approach to vocational education discern personal effectiveness and practical utility as the main characteristics of the vocational tradition (see Pring, 2007). Achieving personal effectiveness would refer to vocational students becoming independent and resourceful in managing everyday tasks which demand a certain level of technical knowledge and skills. The fact that it is mainly teachers in Greece who draw attention to this form of effectiveness may suggest that they recognise the dominance of the academic over the vocational tradition in Greece. This may be interpreted as a need on their part to defend the existence and purpose of vocational education. Achieving practical utility would indicate that students can utilise the knowledge and skills accumulated through vocational education in everyday activities, along with professional tasks. As Elinor observes, "the first thing is that they learn to communicate in the classroom but then are able to communicate both verbally as well as interacting with the customers". Vocational preparation would support young people to develop life skills and utilise them in other areas of life as well, those not strictly associated with employment.

Vocational students would develop skills and knowledge they can utilise to get included in the labour market and the society that surrounds them. One may wonder how students would then perceive themselves. Being useful may be interpreted as a means of prioritising the needs of others and working towards their fulfilment. Therefore, it may not contribute to balancing individual and collective needs, an action which would allow for excelling in life.

8.3 Vocational education valued as second class

Meaning to vocational education appears to be widely attributed through its comparison with academic (or general) education. As such, vocational education tends to be defined in terms of negation. Vocational education is not about theory and mental activities; rather, it is about practice and manual activities. Vocational students are young people who are less interested in academic study or do not perform well academically; rather, they are interested in alternative forms of study which apparently demand lower abilities. Therefore, vocational students are assumed to find a place in life which is *less* and *lower*.

Over the period of 2003-2013, selected policy documents produced in Greece and England acknowledge clearly that there are stereotypical assumptions concerning the standing of vocational education in the labour market and society. These assumptions are expected to affect young people. This is inferred from policy initiatives

to raise the appeal of and participation in vocational education throughout the period of time under study: low attractiveness is interpreted as an indication of awareness of negative perspectives on vocational education and its students. Academic education emerges as a point of reference which leads to the observation that the vocational school or the vocational course is widely valued as second choice (in both countries) or second class (mainly in England). To give an example, policy-makers in England highlight the need to challenge the assumption that vocational education is "a second-class route for those who cannot succeed on academic courses" (DfES, 2005, p. 45). This appears to be a culture-specific issue of concern. According to Atkins and Flint (2015), there is a class organised society whose system frames a hierarchical structure and affects a variety of areas of life.

Vocational education is envisaged to turn into the first (or real) and conscious choice through the promotion of equivalence between academic education and vocational education. Policy initiatives such as higher education permeability are considered central to achieving equivalence. The provision of equivalent opportunities for young people to achieve and progress in education and work is assumed to contribute to social cohesion. Magalhães and Stoer (2003) ascertain that knowledge is "a tool for positioning individuals on (or excluding them from) the labour market" (, pp. 43-44). Vocational education would support its students to position themselves on the labour market; this position may not be equivalent to the place that academic students find. The process of inclusion would be facilitated by the enhancement of human capital, that is, "the stock of knowledge, skills and competences a person has, which affect readiness to perform productive labour all of which can be developed by education and training" (Schultz, 1963, p. 8). The value of human capital acquired through vocational education would not be appreciated in the same manner. In Greece, proposed reforms to vocational education are targeted at securing for vocational students opportunities for "social prestige, stable work and career progression" (MoELLRA, 2011, p. 4). Though the school leaving certificate awarded to academic and vocational students certifies the acquisition of the same level of human capital, the inner value differs.

Indicative references to parity of esteem taken from findings from the interview data show that participant teachers in both Greece and England are aware of and concerned about the possible impact of negative assumptions about vocational education on vocational students; responses may vary in terms of the degree of vulnerability of students. Artemis, who teaches in a day vocational school, affirms that

her students are aware of but not affected by stereotypical assumptions about their identity as learners: "At least they don't sound emotionally affected. But they know that as a social viewpoint, that vocational schools are attended by those who the education system has led to failure". On the other side, Andreas, who teaches in an evening vocational school, reveals that such assumptions may have a negative impact on students: "That is, maybe students who chose to attend the technical school because they were 'rejected'…from a gymnasium, maybe they bear it. They bear this rejection inside them". The way students relate to others, as manifested in their response to negative assumptions, may affect the way they build social ties and social capital. Andreas insists that students could overcome the feeling of rejection in vocational education. What vocational education would do for its students is to support them to develop a sense of acceptance (by peers and teachers), belonging (to a group of learners) and inclusion (in activities and learning) and which they can carry with them on their way to the world of adults.

Fanis, who works mainly with adult learners, touches upon parents' disposition to vocational education to draw attention to lack of knowledge about opportunities for achievement available to students:

> First, it is the lack of information. Second, they think that these schools are second choice, second-class schools. That is, they think that these schools attract students who don't achieve, so they go there, well, they don't learn, they are losers.

What is interesting is that though in the Greek policy context, the term *second class* is not used to render assumptions about vocational education, teachers like Fanis indicate that there are assumptions which reflect a class organised society. In times of economic crisis, where disparities in the distribution of income are becoming more intense, perceptions of the organisation of contemporary society unveil the existence of these disparities. There are teachers in Greece who feel that the middle class will disappear in the near future, even though it has contributed to the consolidation of mass schooling (see Carl, 2009; Fragkoudaki, 1985). Kosmas touches upon the role of the state when he proposes that social changes should precede any changes to its structure. He emphasises that the vocational provision remains the same as it used to be prior to the economic crisis. In other words, despite cuts in funding for vocational education, the quality of its provision remains the same. Initiatives such as closer collaboration among vocational teachers may be contributing in that direction. Minos reveals that teachers would form

informal networks to address the cost of the cuts. Kosmas affirms that interested parties "need to have the system fixed" to add the following: "There are problems. Those problems aren't of vocational education. They are problems of society". Billet (2011) reaches a similar conclusion about the need for social changes when he discusses the importance of improving the way vocational occupations are valued in raising the appeal of vocational education.

Some teachers express their concern about the perpetuation of negative assumptions about vocational education. Beth confirms that it is widely considered second-class education to take the argument a step further and offer a possible explanation about the perpetuation of assumptions:

> I think there are still attitudes towards it being a second-class education, that it isn't as important as an academic education….The ability to do academic work as a sign of intelligence is a good measure, but there are other forms of intelligence, you know.

She highlights the dominance of academic education which overshadows forms of intelligence other than academic and leads vocational education to an unequal standing in contemporary society. Daisy, who teaches both academic and vocational courses, projects higher education as the social setting where young people could prepare to enter the labour market and society on equal terms, regardless of their upper secondary background:

> If the Level 3 voc students and the A-level students both go to uni, everybody is going to get to Level 4. And they all start from the same starting point. Because as long as you have got that degree, nobody ever questions how you got. Well, the question is: Have you got a 2:2? Have you got an honours? So that is a level playing field.

If in the policy context, it is subtly stated that higher education permeability is a way of addressing inequalities in education and work, Daisy expresses her viewpoint in a more direct way. The question which arises is whether vocational qualifications would then be valued in their own right. This is a question addressed by Edan when he wonders whether the decision of vocational students not to pursue higher studies should be considered a negative act. A possible answer lies in the argument that vocational education has "a history of low status and subordination to other powerful institutions, including schooling and higher education" (Billet, 2011, p. 16), which would not enable it to be equally valued. The response to Edan's question would then depend on whether

access to higher education is viewed as a means of promoting social justice or a means of retaining a subordinate role.

It becomes evident that low status and subordination of vocational education mainly to academic education is being perpetuated. Though policy-makers are not disinterested and propose measures to improve the image and appeal of vocational education, these issues seem to resist change. In times of economic crisis, they may become more intense, thus calling for further action and research.

Concluding

In both Greece and England, parity of esteem remains a matter of concern for policy-makers and participant teachers throughout the period of time under study. Policy initiatives for the promotion of higher education permeability may be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the value and attractiveness of vocational education. Most participant teachers in both countries under study support such initiatives. They indicate that higher education would enable vocational students (or graduates) to compete on a level playing field with academic students. Where higher education credentials are required, vocational qualifications may not have to be demonstrated. On the other side, there are some teachers who imply that such initiatives may lessen the value of vocational education. What these teachers seem to share is the possession of higher vocational qualifications. What is inferred from these arguments is that if in the world of adults, individuals are classified into two groups of learners in terms of the level of knowledge (see Brine, 2006), in upper secondary education, there are similarly two groups of learners, this time, defined by the type of knowledge. In such a case, vocational students may encounter some risk of social exclusion, in the form of stereotypes about vocational education and its students. The policy challenge may then be to tackle these deeply-rooted stereotypes.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

In the final part of the study, I will provide a summary of my findings from the documentary analysis and the interview study. I will address the questions of how vocational education in Greece and England is envisaged to support its students to find their place in the labour market and society and hence contribute to social cohesion in times of economic crisis, separately. I will frame the summary by background information to the study, and present the potential contribution of the study to the academic and wider community. Instead of concluding remarks, I will engage with further reflexivity in the study.

9.2 Background information

This study concerns the direction of vocational education delivered in educational institutions and targeted at upper secondary students. This concern has been crystallised in the overarching question of how vocational education can support its students to find their place in life. The life of adults tends to be defined by two main aspects: working life and social life. Each aspect would be governed by values and norms which tend to be taught and learned mainly through education and schooling. Both aspects of life have been translated into two respective research questions. The first question refers to how vocational education can support its students to find their place in the labour market, whilst the second one points to the support that can be offered to students to find their place in the society that surrounds them. Both questions have been framed by the economic crisis which has inspired scholars into posing the question of whether contemporary society can be cohesive. To explore the envisaged contribution of vocational education to social cohesion, the concepts of *human capital* and *social capital* have been used as lenses for analysis and discussion of my research data.

Greece and England have been selected as case studies. Both countries organise and deliver vocational education within the formal education system and at upper secondary level. They both participate in European initiatives for the promotion of a common understanding of VET, including the Copenhagen Process. These facts have been considered substantial to support comparability between Greece and England. Differences in the national models of vocational education as well as the structure and

status of the economy have offered some insight into the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic disruption.

To understand the wider picture of the perceived relation and obtain more detailed insight into that relation, two sets of data have been created. The first set includes selected policy documents produced by the ministries of education in Greece and England over the period of 2003-2013. The second set includes texts of interviews with vocational teachers; during the interview period, they were delivering vocational courses in vocational schools (in Greece) or further education colleges (in England). Regarding the interview study, six themes have emerged from the analysis and discussion of the research data. The first three themes reveal aspects of the relation between vocational education and the labour market and cover the following: vocational education as a tradition; motivation for vocational education; vocational education as a means of labour market inclusion. The remaining three shed light on the relation between vocational education and society and refer to the following: vocational education as a social unit; social roles in vocational education; vocational education as a means of inclusion in society.

Research interest stems from the realisation that vocational education has found a special place in the discourse of education and work. It is widely recognised as one of the two pillars of formal education in Europe, with academic education being the other. Though there are different models of vocational education in Europe, they have certain characteristics in common: they are targeted at young people who are not considered academically oriented and who tend to aim at immediate and specialised employment (see European Commission, 2011; Preston & Green, 2008). There is a systematic European call for raising the appeal of vocational education to the student population and subsequently for increasing participation in and completion of vocational programmes within the formal education system. This indicates that vocational education is not the first or conscious choice of education or schooling, and that the road to establishing parity of esteem between academic education and vocational education is still long. In times of economic crisis, the need to tackle rising youth unemployment appears to give prominence to work-based learning and apprenticeships. A growing number of studies examine the role of apprenticeships in securing employment and contributing to productivity and competitiveness (see Cedefop, 2014b; Molz, 2015). The same does not apply to vocational education which is delivered in the classroom and borrows elements of practices developed in academic education. As such, it may need to redefine its direction and standing in education and work.

Key issues presented in the analysis and discussion part of the study recur in the literature consulted. To begin with, following the launch of the Copenhagen Process in 2002, the purpose of the vocational tradition has expanded from preparation for immediate and specialised employment to include broader preparation for life, such as access to higher (academic) education. The revised approach to vocational education has contributed to a European call for the integration of academic and vocational learning into the vocational education curriculum. Vocational students are expected to enhance their human capital (as defined by Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1963) and hence accumulate further knowledge and skills with specific application to the occupation of choice, along with those applicable to everyday life. This is interpreted as an act of acknowledgement of the more limited nature of vocational learning on the one hand, and the need to provide vocational students with more life chances on the other. In this direction, scholars such as Oakes (2005) argue against the differentiation of the curriculum into academic and vocational. This appears to be the ideal for education and schooling. In reality, the divide between academic education and vocational education remains in formal education.

In the EU policy context, motivation for vocational education is related to young people remaining in education and getting qualified (see Cedefop, 2013). Vocational students are projected as those young people who are not academically oriented and hence wish to pursue further studies in a different way. They are expected to have learning needs and goals which would not be supported by academic education. Vocational education would provide them with a learning environment where they are able to develop a sense of acceptance, belonging and inclusion. In this diverse and inclusive learning environment, they are offered the chance to get educated and qualified. This may be a second chance (see Karmel & Woods, 2008) for those students who have failed exit-level exams and need to repeat the academic year or those who are of a certain age and return to education to complete it. Therefore, vocational education would be attributed a compensatory role, particularly in the case that individuals have been "outside the mainstream of society" (European Commission, 2008, p. 5). In this light, vocational education may function as a chance to avoid the less desirable, lower-paid jobs. This chance, however, may be viewed as a diversion from the more desirable, higher-paid jobs (see Shavit & Müller, 2000).

Following the launch of the Copenhagen Process (2002), greater emphasis is laid upon the relevance of vocational education, as part of VET, to the needs of the labour market. It is anticipated that vocational students will enhance their employability

through specialised preparation for the labour market. On the other side, business organisations will become more productive on the basis of specialised knowledge and skills. The promotion of labour market relevance includes the identification of and response to skills gaps and skills mismatches, thus enabling young people to utilise their qualifications and feel appreciated at work (see European Commission, 2008; McGuinness & Pouliakas, 2016).

The school (to include the college) is considered a community where young people have the opportunity to learn to coexist, create social ties and build social capital (see Coleman, 1988; Dewey, 1916/1966). In the classroom and the workshop, vocational students interact with their teachers and peers. The social aspect of learning, that is, the social interaction that takes place in the classroom, is drawing growing interest. This interest points to the dual role of the vocational teacher, as a traditional teacher and a professional who is familiar with the industry (see Gamble, 2013; Lucas et al., 2012). As such, they are expected to develop their teaching practice on the basis of the worlds of education and work, with the vocational course serving as a *bridge* between these two communities of practice (Higham & Farnsworth, 2012).

9.3 Understanding perceptions of the relation between vocational education and the labour market

Findings from the documentary analysis (the dominant discourse of vocational education) and the interview study (the less dominant discourse of teachers) indicate that the policy direction for vocational education in both Greece and England tilts towards the enhancement of human capital at an individual and collective level. A direct link between vocational education and the labour market is promoted and recognised as justification for the existence of vocational education. Low participation in vocational education emerges as a distraction from the opportunity to invest in vocational studies and obtain formal qualifications on the back of which young people could get included in the labour market. The labour market would then employ vocational students and invest in their qualifications to enhance productivity and contribute to economic growth. In Greece and in times of economic austerity, belief in the power of education to support people to improve their life and to address economic disruption is being challenged. In England and in times of recession, vocational education is attributed a key role in the empowerment of young people to transform their life. What is taken for granted in both cases is that young people at upper secondary level will keep being divided into academic and vocational students, thus following distinct pathways to the

life of adults. Following completion of studies, they may come to coexist in higher education only to be further divided into sectors of the labour market: cohesion comes through division.

Elaborating myself, vocational education in Greece and England is projected as a form of investment in the human being, thus contributing to human capital development at an individual and collective level. Persistent policy concerns about the low percentage of vocational students throughout the period of time under study (2003-2013) highlight the envisaged role and significance of vocational education in the knowledge-based economy: to equip students with suitable qualifications for employment and productivity. Students would, in turn, invest their knowledge and skills in economic growth and prosperity required to keep a society together. Vocational education is portrayed as the ideal learning environment for those young people who may have distanced themselves from academic education. In this environment, they would explore their potential, acquire employability skills and develop constructive (non-violent) behaviour. To improve life opportunities for vocational students, in both Greece and England permeability into higher education is promoted through the integration of academic and vocational learning. In the knowledge-driven European community, increasing opportunities in learning emerges as a means of anticipating and preventing polarisation and fragmentation, two of the perceived risks to social cohesion (see Battaini-Dragoni & Dominioni, 2003). In England and in times of recession, vocational education is expected to provide young people with opportunities for better wages and career prospects (see DfES, 2007). On the other side, in Greece and in times of austerity, such opportunities would be translated into fewer difficulties in entering the labour market (see MoERA, 2013).

The less dominant discourse of vocational education in Greece and England recognises that the policy direction for vocational education is utilitarian in nature. Vocational qualifications would support young people to meet the needs of the labour market, enter employment and contribute to economic growth. A society which is defined by economic growth on the basis of the inclusion and productivity of its members in the labour market is assumed to remain cohesive. Academic education emerges as a point of reference in defining and defending the existence of vocational education in contemporary society. Students have the opportunity to acquire a wide range of skills to enable them to look after themselves and others in the private and the public sphere. Therefore, the vocational tradition needs to be maintained. This tradition can be and has been enriched. This means that vocational students have the opportunity

to broaden their learning horizons. Whether this is appreciated by students or not may depend on their aspirations for the future. In the case of England, there is indication that such activities may be considered a distraction from the learning priority to concentrate on vocational preparation. This shows that vocational education is viewed as the passport to employment and to a sense of labour market inclusion. Dedication to vocational preparation may reveal the fear of exclusion from the labour market due to lack of the required level of knowledge (see Brine, 2006). In the case of Greece, there are indications that students enjoy the opportunity to enrich the experience of vocational education. This is obvious in the case of students who are enrolled in evening schools and hence work or seek employment in the morning and attend school in the evening. In that case, participation in enrichment activities may be interpreted as an opportunity to enjoy a sense of inclusion in society for such activities serve as a bridge between the school community and the local community.

Motivation for vocational education shows that vocational students are aware of the benefits that derive from the enhancement of human capital through education and training. Reasons for choosing vocational education point to three overlapping aspects of the broad identity of the vocational learner. Students may have a clear career goal or a keen interest in their area of study. They may have decided to follow the family tradition, hence responding to an external need, or turn a personal interest into a professional goal, thus addressing an inner need. These students would then prepare *for* an occupation (see Billet, 2011). There are students who are not academically oriented and wish to remain in education to obtain formal qualifications. Vocational education offers them the opportunity to explore and demonstrate their potential in a way that may not be supported by academic education. Therefore, they would prepare *towards* an occupation (see Billet, 2011). These students may have experienced rejection from academic education. Vocational education would allow them to turn the feeling of rejection into a sense of acceptance (by peers and teachers), belonging (to a group of learners) and inclusion (in activities and learning). What is suggested is that besides perceived lack of interest or ability in academic study, there may be other reasons why young people do not remain in academic education. There are students who wish to leave past experiences behind them and make change in the present. These students would have the experience of vulnerability, and aim for change that is not limited to improving the economic or social status in life. Rather, it embraces the way they perceive themselves and relate to others.

In this diverse and inclusive learning environment, vocational students are offered the chance to get educated and qualified. It is obvious that this is a second chance for those who have failed exit-level exams and need to repeat the academic year or those who are of a certain age and return to education to complete it. Vocational education as a means of labour market inclusion represents both sides of the same coin, depending on the angle of view, thus confirming the conclusions reached by Shavit and Müller (2000). On the one hand, it can function as a chance to avoid the less desirable, lower-paid jobs. On the other hand, it can be a diversion from more desirable, higher-paid jobs. In times of economic austerity, it is generally viewed as a diversion from unemployment, marginalisation and exclusion, and a net to accumulate formal qualifications which demonstrate readiness for employment. The need to secure relevance of vocational education to the labour market is becoming more intense. Such measures are expected to enable students to reach economic security through employment. In times of recession and in highly industrialised countries such as England, it may be taken for granted that vocational students can find employment relevant to their studies because they tend to form part of the largest workforce in organisations, thus supporting them to flourish. In times of economic crisis and in less industrialised countries such as Greece, belief in the role of education in employment and economic security is being challenged.

Differences in the structure of vocational education and the economy can be reflected in the responses provided by participant teachers. In Greece, teachers affirm that vocational education is a structured model of learning leading students to formal qualifications. As such, the process of learning is central to the discussion. The economic crisis frames their concerns about the future of their students. They acknowledge that students feel insecure about their future. Geographical and work mobility emerges as a means of addressing employment insecurity. In this light, mobility is assumed to be a diversion from local investment in human capital and development of social ties supporting the creation of social capital. Drawing upon Putnam (2000), young people would lose their roots and any associated social ties in their attempt to achieve economic security. In times of economic crisis, vocational education can *ideally* support its students to meet skills gaps and avoid skills mismatches. In England, vocational education is discussed as a learning opportunity which facilitates the enhancement of student employability. The focus of discussion is on the intended learning outcomes. It is obvious that in highly industrialised countries, young people can feel confident about their future. They can plan other aspects of life

on the back of their vocational qualifications, thus contributing to the cohesiveness of the society that surrounds them. Work mobility does not normally form a matter of consideration, and students tend to utilise their qualifications locally. In this light, creating and maintaining social ties and social capital would be a less challenging goal to achieve.

9.4 Understanding perceptions of the relation between vocational education and society

Findings from the documentary analysis show that there is little policy interest in the creation of social capital on the basis of social ties. It may be that it is taken for granted that young people know how to coexist with others in a constructive way: they have acquired relevant knowledge in earlier stages of formal education (as some teachers indicate) or they consider this a natural process (in accordance with the functionalist approach to learning). Alternatively, the vocational tradition has not been associated with social capital development based on community building and the creation of social ties. There is, however, policy interest in the role of the vocational teacher in student achievement and progression. It is assumed that teachers are expected to interact with their students in a manner which facilitates learning. Furthermore, their dual role is recognised. In Greece, vocational teachers need to demonstrate mastery of their subject matter and knowledge of pedagogical issues, in order to support their students to fill their learning gaps (MoELLRA, 2011). In England, they need to transmit knowledge and share with their students any personal experience of the workplace, in order to support them to prepare better for the labour market (DfES, 2005).

The non-economic benefits from vocational education identified in the policy documents under study offer some indications about the direction of social capital development stemming from human capital. Vocational education would support its students to secure employment on the back of their vocational qualifications and hence meet a social norm to social cohesion. Therefore, they would avoid dead-end routes expected to lead to marginalisation and social exclusion. Vocational education is anticipated to enable young people disengaged from (academic) education to develop the capital required to get included in society. This capital would embody less antisocial and more constructive behaviour which facilitates a more harmonious interaction with others. Harmony in interaction would preserve social order and keep a society (closer) together.

It is obvious from findings from the interview data that participant teachers generally identify a role for vocational education in social capital, social networking and social ties. Depending on the nature of the course they deliver, teachers may link social capital to human capital or touch upon ways it can be developed in its own right. Those who deliver the more technically-based courses directly link social capital to human capital when they discuss how vocational students can become socially competent. They generally agree that vocational education promotes collaboration and hence the coexistence with others. Competences developed through vocational preparation could be transferred to other aspects of life which embody elements of collaboration; networking would fit the social norm. The discussion of collaboration and networking in vocational education echoes Durkheim and his perception of organic solidarity (Lukes, 1973). In this light, teachers recognise the interdependence of vocational students in the knowledge-based economy and society, where they would hold different parts, play different roles and enjoy different benefits. Therefore, the way students learn to collaborate and network could affect the cohesiveness of the society that surrounds them.

There are teachers who view vocational education as a social unit similar to academic education, and identify opportunities for young people to create social ties. Echoing mainly Coleman (1988) and his perception of the school as a community, they generally consider the vocational school or college a community where students share space, time and effort to get to know each other and create social bonds. Social bonding is normally achieved on the basis of a common theme. This theme can be a common interest, such as the area of specialty, or a common goal, such as entry into higher education. Given that vocational students come from diverse backgrounds, what they seem to achieve is to identify similarities in differences. Therefore, they would get ready to enter society with the understanding that where differences exist, there are similarities; differences are not necessarily a social cohesion challenge. They may, however, enter society feeling the need to prioritise the needs of others and put their own needs aside. Given that vocational education is not considered a learning environment which supports *soloists*, collaboration and networking may give prominence to becoming useful to others (and to themselves) over excelling in life and reaching satisfaction and fulfilment as a soloist.

In the vocational community, the vocational teacher fundamentally assumes a dual and complex role, blending practices developed in the worlds of education and work; vocational education and the professional community of practice (see Higham &

Farnsworth, 2012). Such blending unveils where human capital and social capital overlap. Knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour which support personal development and professional growth overlap with specialised preparation for employment. Part of the capital invested in the creation of social ties is transferred to and integrated into preparation for employment. As Coleman (1988) points out, some change is achieved in both types of capital: in human capital development, it is the individual who changes; in social capital development, the change affects relationships. This becomes more evident in responses provided by teachers who focus on the role of the supervisor in the workplace. Students are expected to raise their awareness of the world of work and familiarise themselves with obligations and norms which pertain to the labour market. In this way, they would become aware of the need to follow social norms, in order to get included in society.

It is of great research interest the observation that there are vocational students who view vocational education and the social interaction with teachers as part (or extension) of the family environment. Though they may be aware of the fact that they are preparing for the labour market and need to develop practices which resemble those initiated in the workplace, they feel the need to develop a more meaningful interaction with their teachers. The observation that they open up to their teachers to share their problems with them and that teachers listen to them indicates that there is reciprocal trust. The family represents a social unit defined by a degree of closure (Coleman, 1988). A similar degree of closure may be witnessed in vocational education when students and teachers share time, space and effort to achieve learning outcomes on the one hand, and when proximity is supported by the nature of vocational education (see Misbah et al., 2015). On the other side, it can be an indication that vocational students experience the need to develop a sense of acceptance and belonging outside the family, in the community that surrounds them. Given that they may have the experience of rejection from academic education, including peers and teachers, they feel the need to develop a sense of acceptance and belonging, that sense which the family normally provides to its members.

It is obvious from the responses provided by teachers in Greece that in times of economic crisis, there is a growing interest in enhancing social ties. This is reflected in the discussion of the significance of networking as a means of enhancing life opportunities. Regardless of the mode of networking, social networks offer support to its members and promote solidarity. Solidarity may stem from benefits which accrue from participation in a network (see Bourdieu, 1986); at the same time, it may be related

to a need for emotional non-tangible support. Though social cohesion challenges such as disparities and polarisation (see Chapter 1) trigger feelings of fear and insecurity, the very same feelings can turn into a need to network with others on the basis of social ties. In a diverse learning environment such as vocational education, students apparently find a way to leave differences aside and discover similarities to form the basis for social bonding and networking. What teachers have shared with me confirms the argument that in the wake of the economic crisis, social networks based on solidarity have expanded (see Sotiropoulos and Bourikos, 2014).

9.5 Potential contribution of the research study to the academic and wider community

Research conducted in contemporary society would be targeted at making some contribution to the knowledge shared by the academic and wider community. The purpose of research would reveal how both communities can potentially benefit from the creation of new and shared knowledge. The purpose of my study concerns the role of vocational education in the promotion of social cohesion in times of economic crisis. The majority of recent studies in the field of VET would focus on the role of work-based learning, particularly apprenticeships, in tackling unemployment and securing economic growth. My research interest lies in the role of vocational education in economic and human security; in preparation for employment and coexistence on the basis of social ties. Findings from the documentary analysis indicate that the policy direction for vocational education tilts towards the enhancement of human capital and the strengthening of special preparation for employment. In times of economic crisis, the policy intention to strengthen specialised human capital development is becoming stronger. The ideal picture of a cohesive society is a society where its members assume responsibility for their education and employment, recognise the need to be ready of employment and view the state of unemployment as a chance to further enhance their capital. In this cohesive society, students-members accept and follow social norms expected to contribute to stability, norms which define the more harmonious and less antisocial behaviour.

Two issues of research interest which emerge from my research data and could bring the academic and wider community closer together concern the perception of vocational education as an alternative learning option and the identified need of vocational students for acceptance and belonging. With regards to vocational education being perceived as an alternative learning option, findings highlight the significance for

policy-makers to delineate the meaning of vocational education. A decision needs to be made as to whether vocational education should derive value from the ongoing comparison with academic education or it could enjoy value in its own right. In the case that alternative is used to draw attention away from negative statements about vocational education, it would then be acknowledged that vocational education offers a different way of reaching similar but not necessarily the same learning outcomes. It may lead vocational students to employment or higher studies; however, it may not necessarily secure the same prospects for progress in life. In the case that the intrinsic value of vocational education is appreciated, the term would point to a different philosophy which encourages the association of vocational preparation with the choice of a way of living. Vocational education would then be expected to yield tangible outcomes, such as a salary or a certificate, as well as non-tangible outcomes, such as the creation of social ties. On the other side, there is a perceived policy need to explore the relation between alternative and mainstream. If the term *alternative* is used to describe social activities which do not form part of mainstream social interaction, then an alternative learning option may not be interpreted as a different route to the mainstream (labour market and) society. Rather, it may indicate the existence of an alternative (labour market and) society.

With regards to the need for a sense of acceptance and belonging, findings highlight the significance for the education policy to promote the development of that sense in all stages of formal education on the one hand, and to support vocational students to safeguard that sense acquired through vocational education in their progression into the labour market and society. Vocational education emerges as a learning environment where young people would explore their potential and value as human beings on the one hand, and address any feelings of rejection from academic education on the other. The feeling of acceptance and belonging would be developed mainly through the interaction with vocational teachers and peers: they would identify with others possibly on the same page with them, create social ties and acquire the feeling of inclusion in a society. This reflects the ideal picture of a cohesive society: members of a society recognise their value, relate to others in a more harmonious and less antisocial manner, become part of a group, and feel accepted. When vocational students leave school or college, they may interact with wider assumptions about vocational education and its students. These assumptions may challenge the way they perceive themselves and relate to others. In other words, it may affect coexistence with others in terms of social ties. Furthermore, it may affect dreams and ambitions. The

need to be accepted by others and belong to a society may be so intense that vocational students decide to sacrifice a need for excellence with the intention to meet wider expectations. Given that assumptions tend to be deeply-rooted, the research challenge may be to eliminate any negative assumptions about vocational education. It may be of policy and research interest to develop intervention projects which support the wider society to become sensitised on vocational education and vocational students rather than anticipating young people to ignore negative statements about vocational education.

The question arises as to how these issues could bring the academic and wider community closer together. The first step is for the two communities to enter into discussion around the meaning and purpose of vocational education; a discussion around alternative, acceptance and belonging. A community which is not prepared to embrace whatever may be visualised as alternative may find it hard to understand the purpose or value of vocational education. Where there is adequate information, there can be better understanding. The second step is for policy-makers to recognise the significance of acceptance and belonging in social interaction and implement measures which encourage social bonding, understanding and inclusion in all stages of formal education. In that way, young people would be equipped with the life skills they need to get included in the labour market and society. The third step is to organise and deliver sensitisation projects around the negative impact of stereotypical assumptions about vocational education, assumptions which may remove vocational students from the mainstream society.

9.6 Further reflexivity in the research study

Reflecting back on choices, I understand that I may have taken for granted the meaning of economic crisis. As such, I may have avoided discussing in adequate depth relevant matters. This may be a culture-specific action. Growing and maturing in times of economic crisis and austerity, I drew the assumption that the matters of crisis form part of a common understanding of the organisation of contemporary society; that this is shared universal knowledge which I do not need to analyse and discuss. I may have even been affected by the crisis to the point that I decided to distance myself from matters which affect everyday life and may trigger feelings of hopelessness. I realise that these are matters which I may need to revisit in potential future research.

I realise that I may have shied away from hard facts about vocational education, including participation rates among the student population and government resource investment. The inner need to narrate the story of vocational education in times of

economic crisis by constructing the story of subjective dominant and less dominant perceptions of vocational education may have contributed to my reluctance to use hard facts; figures and numbers which tend to represent aspects of life and may include the voice of the less dominant. I understand that research may need to be contextualised in terms of hard facts, in order to establish and secure a common understanding of the social phenomenon under study. Yet they may stand as a barrier to getting one's voice heard, particularly when that voice has not been empowered.

Furthermore, I realise that though this is a cross-cultural case study, I may not have rendered in adequate detail the picture of the relation between vocational education and social cohesion in times of economic crisis in Greece and England separately. With regards to the interview study, I have provided an account of similarities and differences for each theme of discussion having decided not to present a separate account for each country under study. The need to reach a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of vocational education in times of economic crisis may have contributed to the decision to trace and place emphasis on issues of universal concern for European policy-makers (see the Copenhagen Process).

A PhD study is considered a challenging journey to knowledge and understanding of the social phenomenon under study. This knowledge may include deeper awareness of learning needs and wishes. This has been a challenging and amazing journey for I now know what drives me to conduct research.
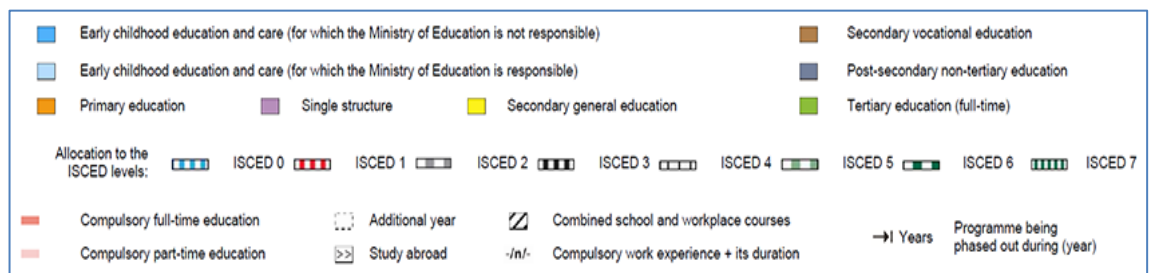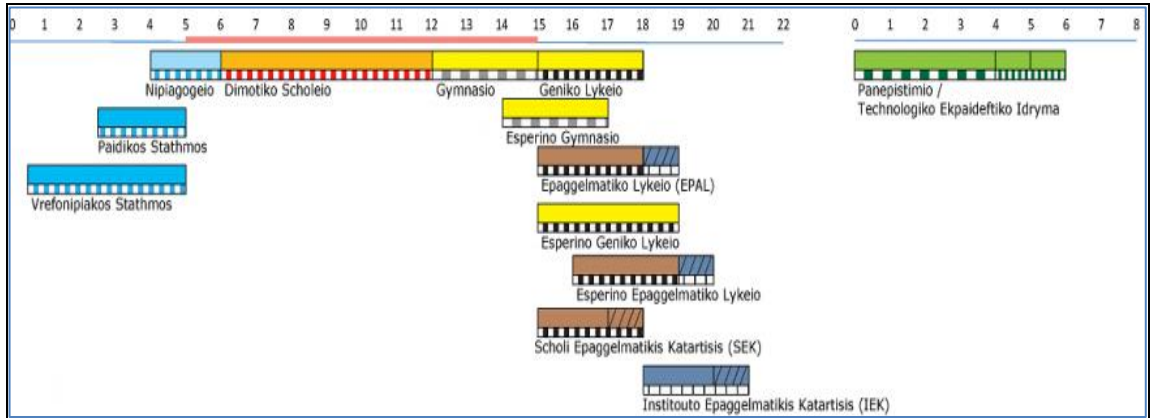
Appendix A

Education System in Greece:

Structure of the National Education System

Age of students

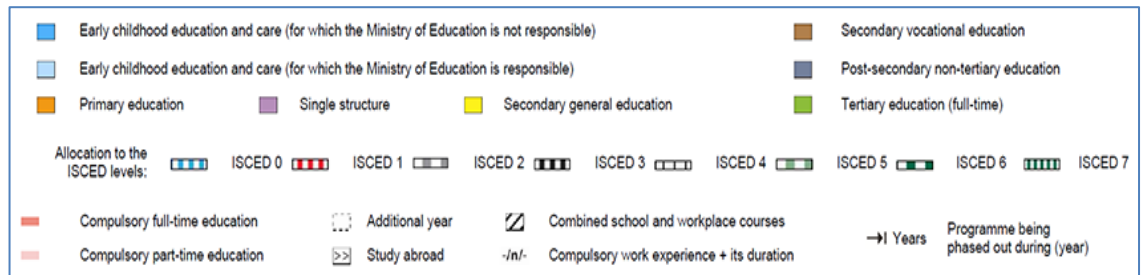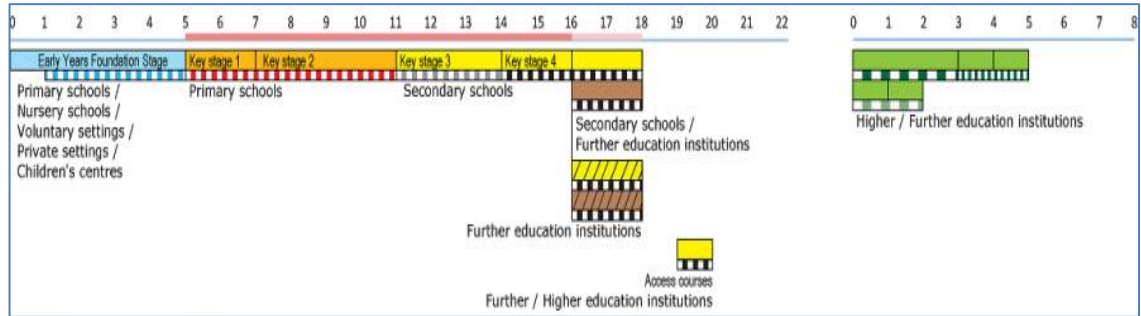Programme duration (years)

Source: Eurydice (2016a)

Appendix B

Education System in England:

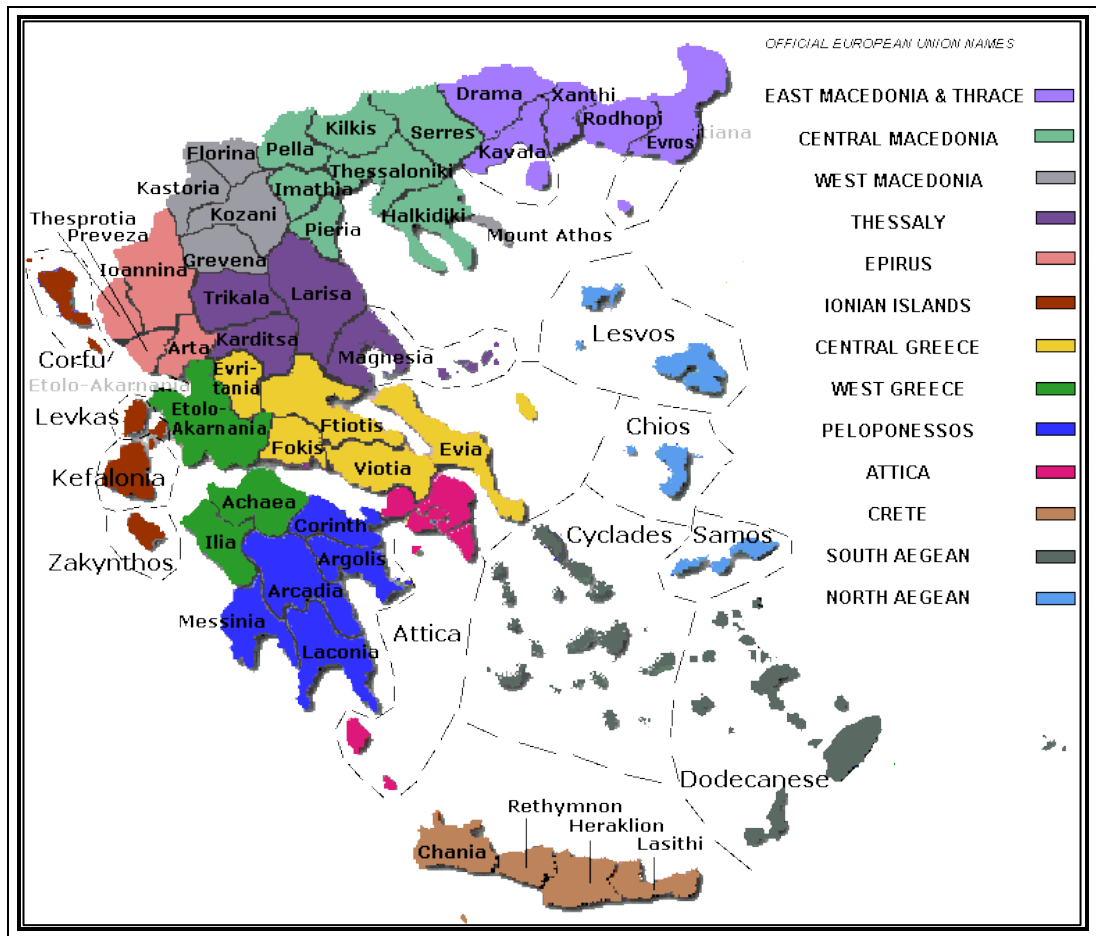## Structure of the National Education System

Age of students

Programme duration (years)

Source: Eurydice (2016b)

Appendix C

Map of Greece

Source: Map Regions and Prefectures (2016)

Appendix D

Map of England

Source: England County Towns (n.d.)

Appendix E

Formal Correspondence

The 2013 letter: The main body

12 October 2013

Dear [name]

Request for help with study

My name is Ioanna Katsikopoulou and I am currently a PhD student at the University of York. My research study is on full-time vocational education for students aged 16-18 and social cohesion in Greece and England. As part of my study, I would like to interview vocational teachers about the role and function of vocational education.

Having read the webpage about [type of education], I am sending this letter to kindly request help from preferably two vocational teachers who teach in one the following areas: [list of areas in bold]. I would like to point out that anonymity of both the College and the teachers will be respected.

The interview focusses on views and opinions of teachers. Based on the pilot interview, it is expected to last around 30 minutes. It could be conducted between [proposed dates], at a time convenient for the teacher who could help, [location of interview].

Please find enclosed a copy of the letter from Dr Paul Wakeling, my supervisor, confirming the content of my study. I understand that this is a busy time; however, I would greatly appreciate your time and effort to help.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Ioanna Katsikopoulou

The 2013 e-letter: The main body

Dear [name]

My name is Ioanna and I am a PhD student at the University of York. My research study is on vocational education and social cohesion in Greece and in England. As part of my study, I would like to interview vocational teachers about possible roles and functions of vocational education.

I am sending this message to kindly request help from preferably two vocational teachers who teach full-time courses for 16-18 year olds. I would be very interested to enter into discussion about vocational education with [name of College] teachers/ lecturers as I understand that two of the areas that the College specialises in are: [list of areas in bold].

Based on the pilot study, the interview is expected to last around 30 minutes. It could be conducted between [proposed dates], at a time convenient for the teachers who could help, [location of interview].

If I could be of any assistance to the College teachers (or teacher) who could possibly help me with my study, I would be happy to discuss this as well.

I understand that this is a busy time; however, I would greatly appreciate your time and effort to help.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely
Ioanna Katsikopoulou

[Contact details]

Introductions/ Icebreaker questions

Meaning of vocational education
Defining vocational education/ the vocational course
Defining vocational skills/ professional development
Defining social skills/ social personal development

Profile of vocational students
Who the vocational students are/ who choose vocational education
What students enjoy most
About their future goals/ dreams/ aspirations

Teacher-student interaction
(in the classroom/ in the workshop)
How teachers view/ treat students, i.e., kids or young adults
How students view/ respond to teachers, i.e., instructors, or supervisors, or family

Being part of vocational education
Developing a sense of belonging/ identity
Peer interaction

Parity of esteem/ equivalence

Roles for vocational education, economic
Role in the economy, i.e., more and better jobs
Role in national/ local community development

Roles for vocational education, social
A role in changing/ improving/ transforming lives
A role in finding a place in society

Meaning of social cohesion
Promoting a society in peace/ balance/ harmony
(Promoting social cohesion)

Appendix F

Thematic Framework for the Interview Data

The relation between vocational education and the labour market

Theme	Code	Definition
Vocational education as a tradition	Maintaining the vocational tradition	The vocational education is maintained: It prepares students for a particular occupation or more broadly the labour market. It focusses on the development of technical/practical knowledge and skills applicable in everyday life as well as the workplace.
	Enriching the vocational education	The vocational tradition is enriched: it prepares students for both work and the social life. It promotes professional as well as personal development through the learning content of courses or the delivery of enrichment activities.
Motivation for vocational education	Having a clear career focus	There are students who have a clear career pathway in mind or a keen interest in their vocational area. They view their education as a means of getting into a particular occupation (Greece and England) or apprenticeship (England).
	Getting qualified	There are students who do not perform academically and wish to learn in a different way. They prefer workshop to classroom learning (Greece) or coursework to exams (England). They view their education as a means of completing further studies and/or getting into university.
	Changing personal history	There are students who come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and who may have encountered learning or other types of problems. They view their education as a means of making some change in their life.
Vocational education	Vocational education as a	Vocational education can promote social justice by providing younger members of the local community

| as a means of labour market inclusion | second chance in education | with a second chance to get educated and qualified for the labour market. In particular, it is a second chance for those who may not have succeeded in academic education or live in communities designated as less developed. |
| | Vocational education as a means of securing employment | Vocational education can secure employment by delivering education and learning which supports labour market relevance. Students would enhance their employability and contribute to productivity and economic growth. Teachers in England sound positive about the outcome of vocational education; teachers in Greece express scepticism which is framed by the economic crisis. |

The relation between vocational education and society

Theme	Code	Definition
Vocational education as a social unit	Becoming socially competent	Vocational students become socially competent on the basis of collaboration and professional attitude. Professionalism includes networking with peers to enhance life prospects (Greece) and learning to relate to others to achieve a professional goal (England). Social capital is built on human capital.
	Building social bonds	Vocational students build social bonds: they bond through a common theme and the sharing of resources such as time, space and interests revolving around their vocational area. The vocational school and the specialty (Greece) as well as the learning content (England) emerge as contributing factors to social bonding. Social capital is built on social ties.
Social roles in vocational education	Roles resembling the world of work	Social interaction is established on practices developed in the world of work: teachers aim to raise students' awareness of the workplace and its requirements. Students' expectations in Greece have

		been affected by the economic crisis, whilst students in England have clear expectations from their teachers and their studies.
	Roles blending the worlds of education and world	The interaction is established on practices developed in the worlds of education and work: teachers assume the dual role of the professional who transmits knowledge and has personal experience of the workplace. Compared to the world of academic education, there is (greater) proximity between teachers and students in vocational education.
Vocational education as a means of inclusion in society	Finding a positive destination in life	Vocational education emerges as a learning environment where students can find a positive destination in life. Finding a positive destination means achieving some financial and emotional sustainability (in Greece) or following a linear order in life (in England).
	Having a realistic view of life	Vocational education emerges as a learning environment where students can get educated on aspects of real life, that is, life outside (the vocational) school or college. Having a realistic view of life is expected to enable students to improve as a person and a professional (in Greece) and develop a wider outlook on life (in England).
	Recognising one's value	Vocational education emerges as a learning environment where each student can recognise their value as a human being. Recognising their value refers to starting to believe in themselves and feeling equal to others (in Greece) as well as developing a sense of achievement and raising their self-esteem (in England).

List of Abbreviations

AoC	Association of Colleges
APA	American Psychological Association
BEC	Bulletin of the European Communities
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
Cedefop	Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
MoELLRA	Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs
MoERA	Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	UNEsco and VOCational education (International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training)
USA	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training

List of References

Adrianoupolitis, K. (2008, September 23). *Ten myths about technical education* [Deka mythoi gia tin techniki ekpaidefsi]. Retrieved from http://www.edra.gr/modules1.php?name=News&file=article&sid=34546.

Agevall, O., & Olofsson, G. (2015). Tensions between academic and vocational demands. In J.C. Smeby & M. Sutphen (Eds.), *From vocational to professional education: Educating for social welfare* (pp. 26-49). London and New York: Routledge.

Anderson, D.L. (2009). Productivism and ecologism: Changing dis/courses in TVET. In J. Fien, R. Maclean, & M.G. Park (Eds.), *Work, learning and sustainable development: Opportunities and challenges* (pp. 35-57). Springer Science and Business Media BV.

Argyriou, A., & Gatsoris, Th. (2011, December). *Technical education in Greece. Myths and truths* [Techniki epaggelmatiki ekpaidefsi stin Ellada. Mythoi kai alithies]. Paper presented at the second scientific conference meeting of ASPETE (School of Pedagogical and Technological Education), Athens, Greece.

Association of Colleges (AoC). (2014, May). *College funding and finance.* Retrieved from https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/College%20Funding%20and%20 Finance%201%20May%202014%20FINAL_0_0.pdf.

Atkins, J. (2012, July). Mending "broken Britain": From the respect agenda to the big society. *LSE Research online.* Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48436.

Atkins, L., & Flint, K.J. (2015). Nothing changes: Perceptions of vocational education in England. *International Journal of Training Research, 13*(1), 35-48.

Atkins, L., Flint, K.J., & Oldfield, B. (2011). *Practical matters: What young people think about vocational education in England.* London: City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development.

Austerity measure. (n.d.). In *Financial Times Lexicon online*. Retrieved from http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=austerity-measure.

Baker, M. (2005, February 26). Why Tomlinson was turned down. *BBC News online.* Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/4299151.stm.

Baker, S.E., & Edwards, R. (2012). *How many qualitative interviews is enough? Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research* (Monograph). National Centre for Research Methods. Retrieved from http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273.

Ball, S.J. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education. 13*(2), 10-17.

Ball, S.J. (1997). Policy sociology and critical social research: A personal review of recent education policy and policy research. *British Educational Research Journal, 23*(3), 257-274.

Ball, S.J. (2015). Accounting for a sociological life: Influences and experiences on the road from welfarism to neoliberalism. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(6), 817-831.

Battaini-Dragoni, G., & Dominioni, S. (2003, November). *The Council of Europe's strategy for social cohesion.* Paper presented at the conference on social cohesion, Hong Kong. Retrieved from http://www.socsc.hku.hk/cosc/ Full%20paper/BATTAINI-DRAGONI%20 Gabriella%2025.11.pdf.

Becker, G.S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bell, L.A. (2007). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L.A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed., pp. 1-14). New York: Routledge.

Billet, S. (2011). *Vocational education – Purposes, traditions and prospects*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. (R. Nice, Trans.). In J.G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brine, J. (2006). Lifelong learning and the knowledge economy: Those that know and those that do not: The discourse of the European Union. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(5), 649-665.

BBC (2010, June 24). Compare recovery measures across Europe. *BBC News online.* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10388576.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bulletin of the European Communities (BEC). (1993). *Growth, competitiveness, employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century* (White paper). Commission of the European Communities. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/documentation/official-docs/white-papers/pdf/ growth_wp_com_93_700_parts_a_b.pdf.

Bulletin of the European Communities (BEC). (1995). *Teaching and learning: Towards the learning society* (White paper). Commission of the European Communities. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/documents/comm/white_papers/pdf/com95_590_en.pdf.

Canning, R. (2012). Re-conceptualising vocational education: The transition from powerful to useful knowledge. In M. Pilz (Ed.), *The future of vocational education and training in a changing world* (pp. 43-61). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Carl, J. (2009). Industrialisation and public education: Social cohesion and social stratification. In R. Cowen & A.M. Kazamias (Eds.), *International handbook of comparative education* (pp. 503-518). Springer Science and Business Media BV.

Cedefop. (2008). *In the finishing straight: From Copenhagen to Bordeaux.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8027.

Cedefop. (2009). *Modernising vocational education and training. Fourth report on vocational education and training research in Europe: Synthesis report.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Cedefop. (2011). *The benefits of vocational education and training – Research paper.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5510_en.pdf.

Cedefop. (2013). *Keeping young people in (vocational) education: What works? – Briefing note.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9084_en.pdf.

Cedefop. (2014a). *Attractiveness of initial vocational education and training: Identifying what matters.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5539_en.pdf.

Cedefop. (2014b). *Developing apprenticeships – Briefing note.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9088_en.pdf.

Cedefop. (2014c). *Terminology of European education and training policy. A selection of 130 key terms* (2nd ed.). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Chanis, St. (2012). Assessment and evaluation of the rate of return on investment in post-secondary vocational education and training in Greece [Ektimisi kai

aksiologisi tis apodotikotitas ton ependyseon stin meta-defterovathmia epaggelmatiki ekpaidefsi kai katartisi stin Ellada]. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Piraeus, Greece.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge.

Coleman, J.S. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity.* National Center for Educational Statistics (DHEW/OE), Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED012275.pdf.

Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology, 94*(Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure), S95-S120.

Colley, H., Chadderton, C., & Nixon, L. (2014). Collaboration and contestation in further and higher education partnerships in England: A Bourdieusian field analysis. *Critical Studies in Education, 55*(2), 104-121.

Colley, H., James, D., Diment, K., & Tedder, M. (2003). Learning as becoming in vocational education and training: Class, gender and the role of vocational habitus. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, *55*(4), 471-498.

Cort, P. (2011). Taking the Copenhagen Process apart: Critical readings of European vocational education and training policy. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Aarhus University, Denmark.

Commission of the European Communities (CEC). (2006). *Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems - Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament*. Commission of the European Communities. Retrieved from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52006DC0481.

Council of Europe. (2004). *A new strategy for social cohesion: Revised strategy for social cohesion* (Report). Council of Europe. Retrieved from http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/RevisedStrategy_en.pdf.

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approached* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Cunliffe, A. (2015, April). *Understanding the impact of research perspectives: The importance of metatheory, research methodology and reflexivity in crafting qualitative research*. WRDTC workshop conducted at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

De Grauwe, P. (2012). The governance of a fragile Eurozone. *Australian Economic Review, 45*(3), 255-268.

De Grauwe, P. (2013, November 9). A mechanism of self-destruction of the eurozone. *Centre for European Policy Studies Commentary.* Retrieved from https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/book/2010/11/Nov%20PDG%20on%20debt%20default%20mechanism.pdf.

Denzin, N.K. (Ed.). (2006). *Sociological methods: A sourcebook.* New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transactions. (Original work published 1970)

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). (2007). *Policy paper, Raising expectations: Staying in education and training post-16.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education (DfE). (2010). *The importance of teaching: The Schools White paper 2010.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education (DfE). (2011). *Wolf Review of vocational education – Government response.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education (DfE). (2015). *Review of vocational education, 2011 - The Wolf Report: Recommendations final progress report.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2005). *White paper, 14-19 Education and skills.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2006). *White paper, Further education: Raising skills, improving life chances.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2007). *Green paper, Raising expectations: Staying in education and training post-16.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education/Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (2013). *Rigour and responsiveness in skills.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/186830/13-960-rigour-and-responsiveness-in-skills-amended.pdf.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). (2012). *Social justice: Transforming lives.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/ file/49515/social-justice-transforming-lives.pdf.

Dewey, J. (1966). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education.* New York: Free Press. (Original work published 1916)

Digital History. (2016). Overview of the Great Depression (ID 2921). *Digital History.* Retrieved from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraID=14&smtID=1.

DSS Player. (Version 6 for Windows). Transcription [Computer software]. Olympus.

Ecclestone, K. (2004). Learning in a comfort zone: Cultural and social capital inside an outcome-based assessment regime. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, (11)*1, 29-47.

Edwards, J.S.S., & Ogilvie, S.C. (2002). Educational objectives in advanced countries: Some economic considerations. In B. Smith (Ed.), *Liberal education in a knowledge society* (pp. 35-65). Chicago: Open Court.

ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistical Authority). (2012). Press release on the 2011 population and housing census [Anakoinosi ton apotelesmaton tis apografis plethismou-katoikion 2011]. *Hellenic Statistical Authority.* Retrieved from http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/ portal/ESYE.

England County Towns. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://gwydir.demon.co.uk/jo/maps/ uktowns.htm.

E2C-Europe. (2016). *About E2C* (The European Association of Cities, Institutions and Second Chance Schools). Retrieved from http://www.e2c-europe.org/e2c/about-e2c.html.

Europa. (2016a). *How the EU works: Greece.* Retrieved from http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/greece/index_en.htm.

Europa. (2016b). *How the EU works: United Kingdom.* Retrieved from http:// europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/unitedkingdom/index_en.htm.

Europa. (2016c). *The history of the European Union.* Retrieved from http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/index_en.htm.

European Commission. (2002). *Declaration of the European Ministers of vocational education and training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.* Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational -policy/doc/copenhagen-declaration_en.pdf.

European Commission. (2004). *Maastricht Communiqué on the future priorities of enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET).* Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/ education/policy/ vocational-policy/doc/maastricht_en.pdf.

European Commission. (2006). *The Helsinki Communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.* Retrieved from ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf.

European Commission. (2008). *The Bordeaux Communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training.* Retrieved from ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/bordeaux_en.pdf.

European Commission. (2011). *Supporting vocational education and training in Europe: The Bruges Communiqué.* Retrieved from ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf.

European Commission. (2016, May 10). *The euro.* European Commission. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/euro/index_en.htm.

European Parliament. (2000). *Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000 - Presidency conclusions.* European Parliament. Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm.

Eurydice. (2015a). *Greece. Secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/ Greece: Secondary_and_Post-Secondary_Non-Tertiary_Education.

Eurydice. (2015b). *Greece. Teachers and education staff.* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Greece: Teachers_and_Education_Staff.

Eurydice. (2015c). *United Kingdom (England). Secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/ mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Secondary_and_Post-Secondary_Non-Tertiary_Education.

Eurydice. (2015d). *United Kingdom (England). Teachers and education staff.* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Teachers_and_Education_Staff.

Eurydice. (2016a). *Greece. Structure of the national education system.* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Greece:Overview.

Eurydice. (2016b). *United Kingdom (England). Structure of the national education system.* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/ index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Overview.

Eurydice. (2016c). *Overview United Kingdom (England).* Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/United-Kingdom-England:Overview.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change.* Cambridge: Wiley.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research.* London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In T.A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (pp. 357-378). London: Sage.

Ferreira, J. (2016, February 2). Greek jobless rate at 24.6% in November. *Trading Economics online*. Retrieved from http://www.tradingeconomics.com/ articles/02112016102658.htm.

Fragkoudaki, A. (1985). *Sociology of education: Theories of social inequality in schooling* [Koinoniologia tis ekpaidefsis. Theories gia tin koinoniki anisotita sto scholeio]. Athens: Papazisis.

Fuller, A., & Unwin, L. (2011). Vocational education and training in the spotlight: Back to the future for the UK's Coalition Government? *London Review of Education, (9)*2, 191-204.

Gamble, J. (2013). Why improved formal teaching and learning are important in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). In UNESCO-UNEVOC (Eds.), *Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice* (pp. 204-238). UNESCO-UNEVOC Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/up/2013_epub _revisiting_global_trends_in_tvet_book.pdf.

Garforth, F.W. (1962). *Education and social purpose.* London: Oldbourne.

Giles, Chr. (n.d.). Recession. In *Financial Times Lexicon online.* Retrieved from http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=recession.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8(*4), pp. 597-607.

Gonon, P. (2012). Georg Kerschensteiner and the plea for work-oriented and vocational education - Germanys' educational debates in an Industrial Age. In M. Pilz (Ed.), *The future of vocational education and training in a changing world* (pp. 285-303). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Gougoulakis, P. (2012). Social competences, social capital and education [Koinonikes ikanotites, koinoniko kefalaio kai ekpaidefsi]. Science and Society [*Epistimi kai Koinonia*]*, 29*, 37-53.

Green, A., Preston, J., & Sabates, R. (2003). Education, equality and social cohesion: A distributional approach. *Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *33*(4), 453-470.

Gross domestic product. (n.d.). In *Business Dictionary online.* Retrieved from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/gross-domestic-product-GDP. html.

Grubb, W.N., & Ryan, P. (1999). *The roles of evaluation for vocational education and training: Plain talk in a field of dreams.* Geneva: International Labour Office.

Harpaz, I., & Fu, X. (2002). The structure of the meaning of work: A relative stability amidst change. *Human Relations* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://hum.sagepub.com/content/55/6/639.

Hawkins, R. (2011, August 15). England riots: Broken society is top priority – Cameron. *BBC News online*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-14524834.

Heikkinen, A. (2004). The erosion of the social and the promotion of social competences in vocational education and training. In A. Lindgren & A. Heikkinen (Eds.), *Social competences in vocational and continuing education* (Vol. 1, pp. 227-253). Bern: Peter Lang.

Helbling, Th. (2009, April 29). How similar is the current crisis to the Great Depression? *VOX*. Retrieved from http://voxeu.org/article/how-similar-current-crisis-great-depression.

Hellenic Parliament. (2016). *Legislative process.* Hellenic Parliament. Retrieved from http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Nomothetiki-Diadikasia.

Hellenic Republic. (2003). Law 3191/2003: National system for the connection of vocational education and training to employment [To ethniko systima syndesis tis epaggelmatikis ekpaidefsis kai katartisis me tin apascholisi]. *Official Gazette*, *258*.

Hellenic Republic. (2006). Law 3475/2006: Organization and function of secondary vocational education and other provisions [Organosi kai leitourgia tis defterovathmias epaggelmatikis ekpaidefsis kai alles diatakseis]. *Official Gazette, 146*.

Hellenic Republic. (2009). Law 3748/2009: Access to tertiary education of holders of vocational school leaving certificate [Prosvasi stin tritovathmia ekpaidefsi ton katochon apolytiriou epaggelmatikou lykeiou]. *Official Gazette, 29*.

Hellenic Republic. (2010). Law 3852/2010: New structure of local government and decentralized administration – Kallikratis Scheme [Nea architechtoniki tis

aftodioikisis kai tis apokentromenis dioikisis – Schedio Kallikratis]. *Official Gazette, 87.*

Hellenic Republic. (2013a). Law 4127/2013: Approval of the update of the medium-term framework for the budgetary strategy [Egkrisi tis epikairopoiesis tou mesoprothesmou plaisiou dimosionomikis stratigikis 2013-2016]. *Official Gazette, 167.*

Hellenic Republic. (2013b). Law 4186/2013: Restructuring of secondary education and other provisions [Anadiarthrosi defterovathmias ekpaidefsis kai alles diatakseis]. *Official Gazette, 193.*

Hesse-Biber, Sh. (2010). Qualitative approaches to mixed methods practice. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), 455-468.

Higham, J., & Farnsworth, V. (2012). What makes a course vocational? School-based work-related programmes in Canada in dialogue with a community of practice. *Journal of Education and Work*, *25*(4), 443-471.

Hippach-Schneidera, U., Weigela, T., Brown, A., Gonon, P. (2013). Are graduates preferred to those completing initial vocational education and training? Case studies on company recruitment strategies in Germany, England and Switzerland. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training, 65*(1), 1-17.

Hoeckel, K., Cully, M., Field, S., Halász, G., & Kis, V. (2009). *OECD reviews of vocational education and training: A learning for jobs - Review of England and Wales.* OECD Publishing.

Huddleston, P., & Unwin, L. (2007). *Teaching and learning in further education: Diversity and change.* London: Routledge.

Iannelli, C., & Raffe, D. (2007). Vocational upper-secondary education and the transition from school. *European Sociological Review*, *23*(1), 49-63.

Jencks, C. (1972). *Inequality: A reassessment of the effect of family and schooling in America.* New York: Basic Books.

Johnson, A.G. (2000). *The Blackwell dictionary of sociology: A user's guide to sociological language* (2nd ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Johnson, R.B., Onwuegbuzie, A.J., & Turner, L.A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research (1)*2, 112-133.

Jenson, J. (1998). *Mapping social cohesion: The state of Canadian research.* CPRN Study No. F/03. Retrieved from http://cprn.org/documents/15723_en.pdf.

Karmel, T., & Woods, D. (2008). *Second-chance vocational education and training.* National Centre for Vocational Education Research. Retrieved from http://www.ncver.edu.au/wps/portal/vetdataportal/restricted/publicationContent.

Kerckhoff, A.C. (2000). Transition from school to work in comparative perspective. In M.T. Hallinan (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of education* (pp. 453-474). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Kirkup, J. (2015, June 21). Eurozone doomed whether Greece leaves or stays, study shows. *The Telegraph* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/11687660/Eurozonedoome dwhetherGreeceleavesorstaysstudyshows.html.

Kolonas, Ch., & Ritzaleou, M. (2012, March 28). Escaping from the village [Apodrasi apo to chorio]. *Ethnos* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.ethnos.gr/article.asp?catid=22768&subid=2&pubid=63636115.

Kuhn, M. (Ed.). (2007). *New society models for a new millennium: The learning society in Europe and beyond.* New York: Peter Lang.

Lamont, M., & Thevenot, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Rethinking comparative cultural sociology: Repertoires of evaluation in France and the United States.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lasonen, J., & Gordon, J. (2008). Improving the attractiveness and image of VET. In Cedefop (Ed.), *Modernising vocational education and training. Fourth report on vocational education and training research in Europe. Background report* (Vol. 3, pp. 15-88). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Lee, C. (2014, November). Lost in translation: Citing your own translations in APA style [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2014/11/lost-in-translation-citing-your-own-translations-in-apa-style.html.

Leitch, S. (2006). *Leitch review of skills. Prosperity for all in the global economy. World class skills.* Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070701082906/ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/6/4/leitch_finalreport051206.pdf.

Lewis, J., & Ritchie, J. (2003). Generalising from qualitative research. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 263-286). London: Sage.

Lewis, Th. (2007). School reform in America: Can Dewey's ideas save high school vocational education? In L. Clarke & C. Winch (Eds.), *Vocational education:*

International approaches, developments and systems (pp. 79-91). London: Routledge.

Liksouriotis, I. (2012, February 12). Myths and truths about social cohesion [Mythoi kai alitheies gia tin koinoniki synochi]. *Kathimeri* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://news.kathimerini.gr/4dcgi/_w_articles_columns_1_12/02/ 2012_472210.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Lindgren, A., & Heikkinen, A. (2004). Introduction. The revival of the social in vocational and continuing education. In A. Lindgren & A. Heikkinen (Eds.), *Social competences in vocational and continuing education* (Vol. 1, pp. 9-15). Bern: Peter Lang.

Lucas, B. (Moderator). (2014). *Vocational pedagogy – What it is, why it matters and how to put it into practice. Report of UNESCO-UNEVOC virtual conference.* UNESCO-UNEVOC Publishing.

Lucas, B., Spencer, E., & Claxton, G. (2012). *How to teach vocational education: A theory of vocational pedagogy.* London: City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development.

Lukes, S. (1973). *Emile Durkheim. His life and work. A historical and critical study.* London: Allen Lane.

Lyotard, J.F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge* (G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Trans.). Manchester University Press. (Original work published 1979)

MacInnes, T., Aldridge, H., Bushe, S., Kenway, P., & Tinson, A. (2013). *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2013.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Retrieved from www.jrf.org.uk.

Maclean, R., & Pavlova, D.N. (2013). Vocationalisation of secondary and higher education: Pathways to the world of work. In UNESCO-UNEVOC (Eds.), *Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice* (pp.40-84). UNESCO-UNEVOC Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.unevoc.unesco. org/fileadmin/up/2013_epub _revisiting_global_trends_in_tvet_book.pdf.

McCoshan, A., Drozd, A., Nelissen, E., & Nevala, A. (2008). *Beyond the Maastricht Communique: Developments in the opening up of VET pathways and the role of VET in labour market integration* (Consolidated final report). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Retrieved from ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/vetreport_en.pdf.

McGuinness, S., & Pouliakas, K. (2016). *Deconstructing theories of overeducation in Europe: A wage decomposition approach* (DP No. 9698). Bonn: IZA (Institute for the Study of Labor).

Magalhães, A.M, & Stoer, S.R. (2003). Performance, citizenship and the knowledge society: A new mandate for European education policy. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, *1*(1), 41-66.

Malkoutzis, N. (2010, August 2). How the 2004 Olympics triggered Greece's decline. *Bloomberg Businessweek* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-08-02/how-the-2004-olympics-triggered-greeces-decline.

Map Regions and Prefectures. (2016, February 2). Retrieved from http://www.sfakia-crete.com/sfakia-crete/prefecturesregions.html.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mastoras, N. (2011, March 1). Plan to merge 300 schools [Schedio gia sunchonefsi 300 scholeion]. *Ta Nea* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.tanea.gr/news/greece/article/4620350/?iid=2.

Matheson, D. (2008). Critiquing the critical: A reflection on critical discourse analysis. *Communication Journal of New Zealand, 9*(1), 83-96.

Matthews, B., & Ross, L. (2010). *Research methods: A practical guide for the social sciences.* Harlow: Longman.

Mellors-Bourne, R., Mountford-Zimdars, A., Wakeling, P., Rattray, J., & Land, R. (2016). *Postgraduate transitions: Exploring disciplinary practice.* York: Higher Education Academy.

Meyer, M. (2001). Between theory, method, and politics: Positioning of the approaches to CDA. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 14-31). London: Sage.

Ministry of Education. (1963). *Half our future. A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England).* London: HMSO. Retrieved from http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/newsom/newsom1963.html.

Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (MoELLRA). (2011). *Technological lyceum: The proposal for technical vocational education* [Technologiko lykeio: H protasi gia tin techniki epaggelmatiki ekpaidefsi]. Athens: Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs.

Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (MoELLRA). (2012). *Technological lyceum and other provisions* (explanatory report and proposed law) [Technologiko lykeio kai alles diatakseis (aitiologiki ekthesi kai schedio nomou)]. Athens: Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs.

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (MoERA). (2006). *Organization and operation of secondary vocational education and other provisions* (explanatory report and proposed law) [Organosi kai leitourgia tis defterovathmias epaggelmatikis ekpaidefsis kai alles diatakseis (aitiologiki ekthesi kai schedio nomou)]. Athens: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (MoERA). (2013). *Restructuring of secondary education and other provisions* (explanatory report and proposed law) [Anadiarthrosi defterovathmias ekpaidefsis kai alles diatakseis (aitiologiki ekthesi kai schedio nomou)]. Athens: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Misbah, Z., Gulikers, J., Maulana, R., & Mulder, M. (2015). Teacher interpersonal behaviour and student motivation in competence-based vocational education: Evidence from Indonesia. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 50,* 79-89.

Molz, A. (Moderator). (2015). *Delivering TVET through quality apprenticeships – Report of the UNESCO-UNEVOC virtual conference*. UNESCO-UNEVOC Publishing.

Morse, J.M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research* (pp. 189-208). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Müller, W., & Kogan, I. (2010). Education. In S. Immerfall & G. Therborn (Eds.), *Handbook of European societies – Social transformations in the 21st century.* (pp. 217-289). New York: Springer.

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). (2014). *Changing attitudes to vocational education.* National Foundation for Educational Research. Retrieved from https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/99947/99947.pdf.

Nurhadi, N. (2015). Child labour in rural Indonesia: Children and parents' perspectives. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of York, United Kingdom.

NVivo. (Version 10 for Windows). Qualitative data analysis [Computer software]. QSR International Pty Ltd.

Oakes, G. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality* (2nd ed.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

OECD. (2011). *Perspectives on global development 2012. Social cohesion in a shifting world*. OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/persp_glob_dev-2012-en.

OECD. (2015). *Preparing students for the future. Education policy outlook 2015 - Making reforms happen*. OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/publications/education-policy-outlook-2015-9789264225442-en.htm.

OECD-ILO. (2014). *Promoting better labour market outcomes for youth*. OECD-ILO. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/OECD-ILO-Youth-Apprenticeships-G20.pdf.

Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2001). *Social capital: A review of the literature*. London: ONS Social Analysis and Reporting Division.

Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2012, July 16). 2011 Census - Population and household estimates for England and Wales. *Office for National Statistics*. Retrieved from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_270487.pdf.

Office for National Statistics (ONS). (2016, January 6). Administrative geography. *Office for National Statistics*. Retrieved from http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/geography/beginner-s-guide/administrative/index.html.

Osborn, A. (2003, April 9). British economy rated among strongest in EU. *The Guardian* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/business/2003/apr/09/politics.europeanunion.

Ozga, J. (2000). *Policy research in educational settings: Contested terrain*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Palios, Z. (Ed.). (2003). *Training and employment* [Katartisi kai apascholisi]. Athens: GSEE Labour Institute.

Papoutsanis, G. (2013, March 10). Draft law "Athina" as an opportunity [Proschedio "Athina" os efkairia]. *Agelioforos* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.agelioforos.gr/default.asp?pid=7&ct=36&artid=171329.

Patrick, F. (2013). Neoliberalism, the knowledge economy, and the learner: Challenging the inevitability of the commodified self as an outcome of education. *ISRN Education, 2013,* (ID 108705). Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2013/108705.

Patrick, J.J. (1997). *Global trends in civic education for democracy.* ERIC Digests. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED410176.pdf.

Pearson. (2016). *Today's BTEC. For today's world.* Pearson Education Ltd. Retrieved from http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/about-us/qualification-brands/btec/about-btec/todays-btec.html.

Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education. (2005). *Report on establishing two main types of lyceum* [Ekthesi gia tin kathierosi dyo kyrion typon lykeion]. Athens: Pedagogical Institute.

Pedagogical Institute/Ministry of Education. (2009). *Proposal by the Pedagogical Institute - Technical and vocational education in secondary education* [Protasi tou Paidagogikou Institoutou – Techniki epaggelmatiki ekpaidefsi sti defterovathmia ekpaidefsi]. Athens: Pedagogical Institute.

Peston, R. (2009, August 7). Timeline: Credit crunch to downturn. *BBC News online*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/business/7521250.stm.

Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Pouliakas, K. (2014). *A balancing act at times of austerity: Matching the supply and demand for skills in the Greek labour market* (DP No. 7915). Bonn: IZA (Institute for the Study of Labor).

Preston, J., & Green, A. (2008). The role of vocational education and training in enhancing social inclusion and cohesion. In Cedefop (Ed.), *Modernising vocational education and training: Fourth report on vocational education and training research in Europe* (Vol. 1, pp. 121-194). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of European Communities.

Pring, R. (2007). 14-19 and lifelong learning: Distinguishing between academic and vocational learning. In L. Clarke & C. Winch (Eds.), *Vocational education: International approaches, developments and systems* (pp. 118-132). London: Routledge.

Production system. (n.d.). In *Business Dictionary online*. Retrieved from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/production-system.html.

Prunty, J.J. (1985). Signposts for a critical educational policy analysis. *The Australian Journal of Education, 29*(2), 133-140.

Putnam, R.D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 6*(1), 65-78.

Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rainsford, S. (2011, October 15). Spain's 'Indignants' lead international protest day. *BBC News online*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15315270.

Rauner, F., & Maclean, R. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of technical and vocational education and training research*. Springer Science and Business Media BV.

Reisigl, M. (2008). Analyzing political rhetoric. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyźanowski (Eds.), *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences* (pp. 96-119). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Richards, L. (2009). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Ritchie, J. (2003). The applications of qualitative methods to social research. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 24-46). London: Sage.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003a). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 77-108). London: Sage.

Ritchie, J., Spencer, L., & O'Connor, W. (2003b). Carrying out qualitative analysis. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 219-262). London: Sage.

Roberts-Schweitzer, E. (Ed.). (2006). *Social cohesion through education: Case studies and tools for using textbooks and curricula* (WBI learning resources). Washington, DC: World Bank.

Robinson, P. (1997). The myth of parity of esteem: Earnings and qualifications. *LSE Research online*. Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2326/1/The_Myth_of_Parity_of_Esteem_Earnings_and_Qualifications.pdf.

Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Sauer, P., & Zagler, M. (2014). (In)equality in education and economic development. *The Review of Income and Wealth, 60*(Supplement 2), S353-S379.

Schofer, E., & Meyer, M. (2005). The worldwide expansion of higher education in the twentieth century. *American Sociological Review*, *70*(6), 898-920.

Schuller, T. (2004). Three capitals: A framework. In T. Schuller, J. Preston, C. Hammond, A. Brassett-Grundy & J. Bynner (Eds.), *The benefits of learning:*

The impact of education on health, family life and social capital (pp.12-33). London: Routledge.

Schultz, T.W. (1963). *The economic value of education.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Shavit, Y., & Müller, W. (2000). Vocational secondary education, tracking and social stratification. In M.T. Hallinan (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of education* (pp. 437-452). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Simons, S. (2016, January 4). Parity of esteem between vocational and academic education? It's time we gave up [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://www.tes.com/news/further-education/breaking-views/parity-esteem-between-vocational-and-academic-education-its.

Skilling, D., & Boven, D. (2005). *No country is an island: Moving the New Zealand economy forward by taking it to the world.* The New Zealand Institute. Retrieved from http://nzinitiative.org.nz/site/nzinitiative/files/Full_report_No_country_is_an_island.pdf.

Smith, M.K. (2011). Briefing: Young people and the 2011 'riots' in England – Experiences, explanations and implications for youth work. *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education.* Retrieved from http://www.infed.org/archives/jeffs_and_smith/young_people_youth_work_and_the_2011_riots_in_england.html.

Sobh, R., & Perry, C. (2006). Research design and data analysis in realism research. *European Journal of Marketing, 40*(11/12), pp. 1194-1209.

Sotiropoulos, D.A., & Bourikos, D. (2014). Economic crisis, social solidarity and the voluntary sector in Greece. *Journal of Power, Politics and Governance, 2*(2), 33-53.

Subrahmanyam, G. (Moderator). (2013). *Tackling youth unemployment through TVET. Report of the UNESCO-UNEVOC online conference*. UNESCO-UNEVOC Publishing.

Taborda, J. (2016, March 3). UK unemployment rate at near 10-year low unemployment rate. *Trading Economics online.* Retrieved from http://www.tradingeconomics.com/articles/01202016094247.htm.

Tabrizi, G. (2014). *The future of vocational education*. Retrieved from https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/6192/The-future-of-vocational-education-Feb14/pdf/ucu_futureofvocationaled_policy_feb14.pdf.

Taylor, S. (1997). Critical policy analysis: Exploring context, texts and consequences. *Discourse*: *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 18*(1), 23-35.

Taylor, S. (2004). Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': Using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy, 19*(4), 433-451.

Technopolis. (2016). Thessaloniki can indeed become a centre of attraction and development of start-up companies [Borei h Thessaloniki na katastei polos elksis kai anaptyksis neofyon epicheiriseon]. *Technopolis*. Retrieved from http://www.technopolis.gr/news/0/deltio_typou_startup_europe_week_thessalon iki.

Temin, P. (2010). The Great Recession and the Great Depression. *Daedalus, 139*(4), 115-124. Retrieved from http://www.nber.org/papers/w15645.pdf.

Tessaring, M., & Wannan, J. (2004). *Vocational education and training: Key to the future - Cedefop synthesis of the Maastricht Study.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/ lifelong-learning-policy/doc/policy/cedefop_en.pdf.

The Economist. (2007, November 29). No country is an island. Japan is reluctantly embracing globalisation. *The Economist* [electronic version]. Retrieved from http://www.economist.com/node/10169924/print.

The Literature Network. (2016). *Meditation XVII.* Retrieved from http://www.online-literature.com/donne/409.

Tikly, L. P. (2013). Reconceptualising TVET and development: A human capability and social justice approach. In UNESCO-UNEVOC (Eds.), *Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice*. UNESCO-UNEVOC Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/up/ 2013_epub_revisiting_global_trends_in_tvet_book.pdf.

Tomlinson, M. (Chairman). (2004). *14-19 curriculum and qualifications reform. Final report of the Working Group on 14-19 reform.* Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20050301194752/http://www.dfes.go v.uk/14-19/documents/Final%20Report.pdf.

Troyna, B. (1994). Critical social research and education policy. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 42*(1), 70-84.

Tzanakis, M. (2013). Social capital in Bourdieu's, Coleman's and Putnam's theory: Empirical evidence and emergent measurement issues. *Educate, (13)*2, 2-23. Retrieved from http://www.educatejournal.org.

Tuckett, A. (Chair). (2016, February). *HIVE-PED research seminar six: Adult learning in a time of austerity.* Seminar workshop conducted at the University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom.

United Nation (UN). (2012, January 30). Perspectives on social cohesion - The glue that holds society together. *UN DESA*. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/ en/development/desa/news/policy/perspectivesonsocialcohesion.

UNESCO. (2015a). *Education for All 2000-2015: Achievements and challenges* (EFA global monitoring report). UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO. (2015b). World Education Forum 2015 – Final report. UNESCO Publishing.

van Dijk, T.A. (2001). Multidisciplinary CDA: A plea for diversity. In R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 95-120). London: Sage.

van Dijk, T.A. (2006). Politics, ideology, and discourse. In K. Brown (Ed.), *Elsevier Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (2nd ed., pp. 728-740). Elsevier Ltd.

Varoufakis, G., Patokos, T., Tserkezis, L., & Koutsopetros, C. (2011). The economic crisis in Greece and in Europe in 2011 [H oikonomiki krisi stin Ellada kai tin Evropi to 2011]. Athens: GSEE Labour Institute.

West, J., & Steedman, H. (2003). Finding our way: Vocational education in England - CEPOP18 (Monograph). *LSE Research online*. Retrieved from eprints.lse.ac.uk/13485/1/OP018.pdf.

White, C., & Laczik, A. (2016). Engaging disaffected learners in Key Stage 4 through work-related learning in England. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training, 68*(1), 17-32.

Winch, C. (2000). *Education, work and social capital: Towards a new conception of vocational education.* London: Routledge.

Winch, C. (2013). Three different conceptions of know-how and their relevance to professional and vocational education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *47*(2), 281-298.

Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about - A summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 1-13). London: Sage.

Wodak, R. (2008). Introduction: Discourse studies - Important concepts and terms. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyźanowski (Eds.), *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences* (pp. 1-29). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. London: Sage.

Wodak, R., & Krzyźanowski, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wolf, A. (2011). *Review of vocational education – The Wolf Report.* Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf.

Woods, P.A., & Woods, G.J. (Eds.). (2009). *Alternative education for the 21st century: Philosophies, approaches, visions.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wright, B. (2016, February 19). EU summit: What Europe's reporters make of Brexit talks. *BBC News online.* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ukpoliticseureferendum35608464.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.