



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
**Α.ΔΙ.Π.**  
ΑΡΧΗ ΔΙΑΣΦΑΛΙΣΗΣ & ΠΙΣΤΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ  
ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΝΩΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗ

HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
**H.Q.A.**  
HELLENIC QUALITY ASSURANCE  
AND ACCREDITATION AGENCY

## EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Department of Early Childhood Care & Education (ECC&E )

Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki (ATEI-Thessaloniki)

May 2014



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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS, CULTURE & SPORTS  
MANAGING AUTHORITY

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## **External Evaluation Committee**

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) responsible for the External Evaluation of the Department of Early Childhood Care and Education of the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki (a.k.a. the Department of Preschool Education as of 2013) consisted of the following three (3) expert evaluators drawn from the Registry constituted by the HQA in accordance with Law 3374/2005:

- 1. Dr. Mary Andrianopoulos**, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Disorders, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, USA. (Coordinator)
- 2. Dr. Panayiotis Angelides**, Professor and Dean, Department of Education, University of Nicosia, Cyprus.
- 3. Dr. Eleonora Papaleontiou-Louca**, Associate Professor, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, European University of Cyprus, Cyprus.

***N.B.*** *The structure of the “Template” proposed for the External Evaluation Report mirrors the requirements of Law 3374/2005 and corresponds overall to the structure of the Internal Evaluation Report submitted by the Department.*

*The length of text in each box is free. Questions included in each box are not exclusive nor should they always be answered separately; they are meant to provide a general outline of matters that should be addressed by the Committee when formulating its comments.*

## ***Introduction***

### **I. The External Evaluation Procedure**

The External Evaluation Committee (EEC) participated in the evaluation of the Department of Early Childhood Care & Education at the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki (ATEI-Thessaloniki) at the request of by the Greek Ministry of Education. It is important to note that in the past year (2013) the Department changed its name to the Department of Preschool Education (123 / 06.03.2013) to better reflect the revised curriculum, which they Department hopes to implement this September 2014. In the sections that follow, the Department will be referred by the acronym ECC&E (Department of Early Childhood Care & Education).

The President of ATEI-Thessaloniki on the Sindos campus, the Chair of Department of ECC&E, Dr. Natsiopoulou, the Vice Chair, Dr. Zachopoulou and the Department of ECC&E faculty, lecturers and staff whole-heartedly participated in the evaluation process with professionalism, honesty, and enthusiasm. The sections that follow discuss the conclusions reached by the EEC.

### **Brief Description of Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki**

The Alexander TEI of Thessaloniki is one of the oldest and the second largest Technological Educational Institute of Greece and comprises five (5) schools offering over 2000 course modules in total. ATEI-Thessaloniki has three campuses; however, the main campus is located approximately 15-17 km outside the city of Thessaloniki in town of Sindos. There are approximately 20,000 students attending ATEI-Thessaloniki. According to the President of ATEI-Thessaloniki, in the past five years the faculty at ATEI-Thessaloniki have been downsized by approximately 50 faculty members, yet only 10 new positions have been filled to date.

The Department of Early Childhood Education (ECC&E) resides in the School of Health and Medical Care. The Department of ECC&E was established and became operational in 1985 under by the Presidential Decree 561 (GG 199 sq. A/27/11/1985). The first graduates in the Department received their degrees in June 1989. As of October 2013, the Department of ECC&E has a student body of approximately 777 undergraduates enrolled, among whom 600 students are within the normal four-year period of study and 177 have

exceeded the normal duration of the four year program. During the 2013-2014 academic year, approximately 100 new students were admitted and 30 students transferred into the Department. Approximately 119 students graduated during the 2012-2013 academic year.

The Department is comprised of two (2) Professors, two (2) Associate Professors, one (1) Assistant Professor, two (2) lecturers, five (5) teachers on contract who teach collectively a total of 18 hours, two (2) administrative staff, and one (1) technical staff. Among the current faculty, one faculty member has been promoted in the past year to rank of Professor.

The mission of the Department ECC&E is to promote the creation, development and dissemination of knowledge in sciences of early childhood education and care of infants and preschool aged children through teaching and applied research.

### **Brief outline of the site visit**

The EEC's site visit took place during April 28 to April 30, 2014 and their report was completed on the two days that followed (May 1 to May 2, 2014) in Athens, Greece. On April 28, 2014, the EEC departed for and arrived in Thessaloniki and was greeted at the airport by Lecturer Michael Vitoulis who transported the EEC to the hotel in Thessaloniki. At the hotel, the EEC met with the Department's Chair, Dr. Natsiopoulou and the three (3) members of the Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC), Dr. Evangelia Vidali-Laloumis, Dr. Evridiki Zachopoulou, steering committee and advisor of the TEI Erasmus Program, and Dr. Anastasia Psalti. The EEC reviewed the schedule with the IEC for the two-day site visit with the Chair and IEC.

On April 29, 2014, the EEC met with the faculty in the Department of ECC&E, Ms. Christina Megalonidou, lecturer, Ms. Zoi Tziortzioti, Special Technical Staff to the Department, Ms. Aikaterini Tzortzou, head of the administrative staff, and Ms. Mina Papadiamanti, administrative assistant.

### **The EEC met and interviewed the following individuals during the site visit:**

- The ATEI-Thessaloniki President on the Sindos campus;
- Dr. Thomai Kapoulitsa, Assistant Professor of the Department;
- A group of four (4) part-time lecturers in the Department of ECC&E (1 male and 3 females);
- A group of three (3) off-campus practicum mentors (supervisors), one of whom is a head teacher (3 females);

- A group of approximately 47 current undergraduate students in ECC&E (all female);
- The ATEI-Thessaloniki main campus' library administrator, including one library staff in the School of Health and Medical Care's library;
- One off-campus affiliate and administrator at the St. Stylianos City Foundation Infant School Preschool and Residential Home in Thessaloniki, including a subset of preschool teachers and staff at the school.

**The EEC visited the following facilities:**

- Sections of main campus at ATEI-Thessaloniki (Sindos campus), the ATEI-Thessaloniki's President's office; including the campus restaurant;
- The ECC&E faculty's six (6) offices, one (1) main administrative office and the Special technical administrator's office;
- Three (3) classrooms that hold a capacity of about 50 people, which are equipped with built-in permanently installed projectors and supporting equipment;
- The Department's computer lab contains approximately 17 workstations and holds a capacity of approximately 24 individuals and is WiFi accessible;
- The Early Childhood Laboratory with a capacity of about 30 people;
- The Laboratory of Visual Arts with a capacity of about 25 people;
- The Pedagogical material workshop with a capacity of about 20 people;
- The boardroom;
- The music hall with a capacity of about 40 people;
- The Music and Movement Education workshop with a capacity of about 30 people;
- The School of Health and Medical Care library that also contains a small computer lab with approximately 20 workshops, which is WiFi accessible;
- The main campus student center; and
- ATEI-Thessaloniki's main library and computer workshop; and
- Observation of a portion of Mr. Vitoulis' lecture, which was in progress;
- As previously stated, a visit to the off-campus training practicum site at the St. Stylianos City Foundation Infant School in Thessaloniki, including a subset of preschool teachers, staff and children attending at the preschool.

**The EEC was provided the following documents for their review:**

- The orientation documents provided to the EEC by HQA;
- The *Internal Evaluation Report* (IER) of the ECC&E for the academic years 2011-2012, which included several of tables depicting the entire curriculum;

- The Prospectus of ATEI-Thessaloniki
- The ADIP ECC&E School Profile document, the ECC&E faculty's curriculum vitae (CV);
- A sample of student theses and course paper projects;
- Digital copies of seven (7) PowerPoint presentations that took place during April 29, 2014 site visit; the main library's information packet; and the practicum protocol recording booklet;
- A sample of published books written by a few of the ECC&E faculty, including some course textbooks;
- A sample of approximately 15-20 academic course syllabi and course outlines;
- Off campus practicum recording booklet;
- Procedures and Minutes for Academic Promotion of Faculty;
- Samples of exams and assignments.

## **II. The Internal Evaluation Procedure**

The EEC believes that the IER, the supplemental and all the other materials listed above that were reviewed prior to and during the site visit, including the on-site interviews and observations during the site visit, were appropriate and adequate for the EEC to conduct its external evaluation process of the Department of ECC&E at ATEI-Thessaloniki. The EEC believes that it succeeded in meeting its objectives for this internal evaluation.

The EEC wants to thank the President at ATEI-Thessaloniki, the faculty and staff of ECC&E Department, all its affiliates and students for its hospitality and supportive nature during the entire site visit.

## **A. Curriculum**

*To be filled separately for each undergraduate, graduate and doctoral program.*

### **APPROACH**

- *What are the goals and objectives of the Curriculum? What is the plan for achieving them?*

The aim of the current curriculum of the Department is the excellent training of students for the education and care of infants and preschool children. It also aims to ensure the students professional and scientific career (e.g., workers in nursery / kindergartens and childcare centers, establishment and operation of Day Nurseries, as well as their participation in science related research programs).

The program tries to meet the above goals by offering a comprehensive theoretical training in the education and care of preschool children, through special courses that provide specialized knowledge and skills necessary for the profession.

The acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills is secured through students' participation in written and oral examinations, assignments and practical work, as well as their participation in practicum experiences (in kindergarten various entities such as municipalities, Welfare Foundations, private legal entities and private files), including various forms of teaching and participation through workshops, visits, fieldtrips, and practical exercises.

More specifically, the program offers courses in the following categories:

- (A) 8 classes General Foundation (GF): 6 compulsory and two major electives from which students can choose from 4 courses offered;
- (B) 14 lessons Special Infrastructure): 10 mandatory and 4 major electives forced-choice from which students can choose between eight courses offered;
- (C) 14 specialization courses (EID): 12 required and two major electives forced-choice from which students can choose from 4 courses offered; and
- (D) 4 lessons Administration, Economics, Law and Humanities: 2 Compulsory (C) and 2 forced-choice who can choose from 4 courses offered.

The program also requires an internship, which was established by TEI in 1984, and since then, is considered as a mandatory part of the program, which is carried out in two phases, starting 1 of October 1 of April each year.

After the 7th semester, the students are required to conduct a 6-month internship by actually working at a private or public entity providing that they have passed all specialization courses. The Department's Practicum Committee consists of three (3) members of the faculty who coordinate the activities related to the practicum. Students are given the right to choose their own employment to fulfill their internship. The Department participates in the internship, through which they apply innovative programs. There is

additional funding for students taking part in the program and a small stipend for the off-campus participating teacher-mentor.

A few days before a student starts the practicum, s/he submits a declaration document to the Department, and if this meets certain requirements, the application is accepted and the candidate can start his or her practicum.

Students are mentored and supervised throughout this procedure by the designated ECC&E faculty and administrators and the on-site practicum teacher. Some of the students opt to do their practicum at a remote setting. This creates challenges in that the level of supervision or mentoring is not consistent at all practicum settings due to factors related to distance. This is an area that needs improvement as supervision and mentoring of interns is an essential component for the completion of their training and studies.

The procedures and the assessment of the student is described and referenced in the off campus practicum recording booklet and the Department's webpage, which regularly posts information for students about these procedures.

All classrooms and laboratories are equipped with permanently installed projectors and the necessary supporting equipment. In most areas there is internet access, but it is not Wi-Fi accessible.

The number of rooms for lectures and labs are adequate; however, the *size* of each classroom is not sufficient to accommodate the 100-120 students enrolled in the course each semester. For this reason faculty choose to divide the 100 or so students into two groups and sections, so that each lesson is repeated twice weekly to accommodate all the students. However, this arrangement limits actual the duration of the three (3) hour scheduled lecture to approximately 1.5 – 2.0 hours without a break. Thus, instruction time is reduced for students per course. Moreover, faculty workload increases due to teaching two identical sections weekly, which hinders their ability to perform other required duties, such as holding office hours for students and research.

In addition to the above, the department aims to:

- attend the major international developments in scientific and educational fields
- develop partnerships with higher education institutions in Greece and abroad
- collaborate with institutions related to the discipline (e.g. kindergartens)
- conducts research, conference papers and publications

For this purpose, the faculty publish their work in scientific journals, participate in scientific conferences or symposia, develop partnerships with academic institutions or abroad, and develops mobility programs. The TEI partially supports some of these research activities with funds allocated for this purpose, but due to hard economic times there is very

limited for research and professional travel. This issue is addressed in the Research Section.

Finally, the curriculum is disseminated to the public domain through the Department's webpage ([www.bc.teithe.gr](http://www.bc.teithe.gr)), which is very informative and a useful resource for the community, prospective and current students and others.

- *How were the objectives decided? Which factors were taken into account? Were they set against appropriate standards? Did the unit consult other stakeholders?*
- *How was the curriculum decided? Were all constituents of the Department, including students and other stakeholders, consulted?*

The content of the curriculum of the Department was established by Decree No. 43257/E5 (3.5.2006) - Gov. 629/19-5-2006 (issue B) after a proposal by the Department Council. According to the Internal Evaluation Report (IER) regarding the development of the content for the curriculum, current scientific developments in the care of infants and children were taken into consideration, including practical social and family circumstances (e.g., long working hours of parents, single parents, etc.) and other factors.

There is a 'Curriculum Revision' committee, which includes input from instructors and students at meetings and some form of evaluation (e.g., questionnaires for instructor and course evaluations). The process of evaluating courses regularly and incorporating this feedback into improving the curriculum is not clear to the EEC. It is not clear to the EEC how and when student feedback is solicited (e.g., annually, per course each semester vs. once annually, etc.) and how such feedback contributes to change and improvements in the program.

- *Is the curriculum consistent with the objectives of the Curriculum and the requirements of the society?*

It is the opinion of the EEC that the curriculum needs some adjustments, so that all of the curriculum's objectives are met and improve the education and training of students. The revised program (see below in 'Improvement' Section) addresses many of the challenges and the increased needs of the current society in the municipality and State.

It is the belief of the EEC that the students lack basic research skills in collecting, analysing and interpreting research data. This is an essential skill given that current practices need to be evidence based and data driven. Students' caring for and delivering instruction to infants and young children need to measure observations and outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively. Similarly, faculty and off-campus educators and mentors need to assess ECC&E students using both quantitative and quality metrics to assess performance and provide feedback. Moreover, proficiency in the use of the English language allows students to easily access international scientific journals, references and other resources and integrate this information into their senior thesis. This is an area that needs improvement

in the curriculum and training of students.

- *Has the unit set a procedure for the revision of the curriculum?*

As previously stated, the faculty have recently revised their curriculum, which they hope to implement in September 2014. Please see 'Improvement' section below.

The Departments' revised curriculum is intended to reflect the primary focus of the Department's mission, which is to focus on educating the next generation of preschool educators in the education and care of young infants and children between the ages of 5 to 6 years. In addition, the Department's new name reflects the change in the emphasis in the education and care of young children based on scientific and theoretical constructs of early childhood education.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- *How effectively is the Department's goal implemented by the curriculum?*
- *Does the Department have the necessary resources and appropriately qualified and trained staff to implement the curriculum?*

The Departments' goals seem to be sufficiently met by the curriculum; however, there are areas that need improvement. For example, the curriculum is lacking courses in Math (content), Math Education (teaching of Math), Science Education, and Special Education and Learning Disabilities, and a course in Pediatrics. The curriculum should be constructed so that the fundamentals in these content areas are first taught to students and then applied during students' practical training. Courses seem to be lacking in foreign languages; however, the IER reports that foreign language is part of the curriculum. It is not clear to the EEC based on the documents and information provided in the IER and during the site visit whether at least one compulsory course in foreign language is required.

There is need for more faculty with specialization in certain topics and disciplines as noted above. For example, there is only one faculty member with specialization in psychology available to teach a broad range of courses.

The faculty are cognizant of these limitations due to the limited economic resources, but unfortunately they cannot make such improvements to the curriculum and the number of faculty since it requires financial resources. Similarly infrastructure is limited and inadequate due to these economic factors.

- *How does the curriculum compare with appropriate, universally accepted standards for the specific area of study?*

The curriculum is comparable with those of other programs in Technological Educational Institutes (TEI) and some other Universities in the State.

There is a need for improvement regarding the calibre and rigor the students' senior thesis during the final semester. As previously stated, the thesis should be more empirically

driven and research based, to include research questions, methodology, stimuli, and outcome measures, and analyses. Theses that are more descriptive in nature should also be based on scientific principles for scholarly work. Students should be encouraged to use more peer-reviewed articles in electronic, scientific journals, which are accessible through their library. It is not clear to the EEC whether a thesis is a Departmental or TEI requirement. A different option to the required thesis might be considered due to the limited faculty and staff to supervise the demands of thesis work. For example, a set of course electives can be offered in lieu of requiring a thesis.

- *Is the structure of the curriculum rational and clearly articulated?/ Is the curriculum coherent and functional? / Is the material for each course appropriate and the time offered sufficient?*

In most cases, the structure of the curriculum is rational and follows a coherent order.

System prerequisite courses apply to the Department, particularly for courses taught in chains:

For example:

1. Nursery I, Semester One
2. Nursery II, Semester Two
3. Nursery III, Semester Three

Another example may include:

1. Activity Theory & Methodology of Preschool I, Semester Three
2. Activity Theory & Methodology in Preschool II, Semester Four

In addition, there are specialization courses and prerequisites for the six-month internship. These include: 1) Visual Arts I & II; 2) Music-I & II; 3) Nursery III, V, VI, VII; 4) Children's Literature; 5) Counselling Psychology; 6) Music and Movement Education I & II; 7) Theatrical Play; 8) Puppet; 9) Pedagogical Material; 10) Special Education; and 11) Activity Theory and Methodology Preschool II.

A systemic pattern for completing the prerequisite courses exists. However, as it is also acknowledged by the IER, it should be also extended to the psychology courses, so that each student successfully completes the course, "Introduction to Psychology", before moving on to the "Developmental Psychology" course in the second semester.

It is suggested that some courses be renamed, such as Developmental Psychology, which is actually 'Psychology of Infants and Preschool Children'. In addition, it is suggested that the curriculum includes two (2) Developmental Psychology courses: 1) for Infants and Preschool Children; and 2) for Children and Adolescents (with some reference to development throughout the life span). The EEC suggests that these courses can be alternatively be entitled, Developmental Psychology I, and Developmental Psychology II.

The name of the course, (i.e., “Νεοελληνική Γλώσσα”), which was part of the old curriculum - should be renamed as this course includes topics, such as, the theories of speech development (Skinner, Chomsky, Lenneberg), the relationship of language and thought, the effect of the environment on speech acquisition, the development of speech and language development in preschool children, etc.. It is suggested that the course perhaps be renamed to either, “Language and Thought”, or “Language, Thought and Communication”, or “Children’s Language Development”. It is important to have a course in “Νεοελληνική Γλώσσα”, but this course should include different content.

It is suggested that all course syllabi and course outlines include aims and objectives. Some ‘Course Outlines’ reviewed by the EEC do not include objectives, aims or learning outcomes. At most, a general aim is included. The aims and objectives per course syllabus/outline need to be phrased into specific and measurable learning outcomes.

Moreover, most Course Outlines include only one or two references. It is suggested a additional list of at least 5-6 more references or sources be included for further reading. However, some syllabi include more references.

## **RESULTS**

- *How well is the implementation achieving the Department’s predefined goals and objectives? / If not, why is it so? How is this problem dealt with?*

The program is basically well established and the Department’s goals are met. However, there are still opportunities for improvement, which will greatly enhance the program and curriculum with the addition of staff (both academic and administrative) with broader expertise and specialization, including larger rooms and infrastructure.

Nevertheless, the Department has a strong track record of graduating and employing the students into the community and State. Current students, off campus supervisors and alumni reported satisfaction with the Department of ECC&E’s ability to educate the next generation of preschool educators and infuse them into the workforce. Several graduates of the program have been admitted for graduate studies in institutions of higher education in Greece and abroad. This is a strength of the program and it should continue to improve its curriculum to better serve the needs of the students and the society.

- *Does the Department understand why and how it achieved or failed to achieve these results?*

The faculty realizes the basic restrictions and limitations of the program such as, lack of more faculty members and lack of space; however, these issues can not be resolved on a Departmental level as they hinge on financial resources. Nonetheless, faculty are committed to meeting the needs the students and ATEI as evidenced in personal investment in their time and effort, including trying to secure funds to support the Department program.

## **IMPROVEMENT**

- *Does the Department know how the Curriculum should be improved? / Which improvements does the Department plan to introduce?*

The Department has already made a revision of the current curriculum aiming to implement it the following academic year if approved. This revision of the curriculum is an improvement as it seems to take more into consideration the current trends in education and the role of Preschool Education in a modern society (using new technologies and modern pedagogical approaches such as Digital Pedagogy, Assessment in Early Childhood education, psychosocial interventions). There is still room for improvement and the faculty seems willing to incorporate feedback and suggestions for improvement.

The Department and ATEI-Thessaloniki envision developing a Ph.D. program to enhance research on campus. This vision is a high aim and it requires much ground work and conceptualization before and it can be strategically implemented.

### **C. Teaching**

#### **APPROACH**

- Does the Department have a defined pedagogic policy with regard to teaching approach and methodology?

Please comment on:

- Teaching methods used
- Teaching staff/ student ratio
- Teacher/student collaboration
- Adequacy of means and resources
- Use of information technologies
- Examination system

#### ***Teaching Methods and Teacher/Student Collaboration***

The EEC has based its evaluation on the following sources:

Interviews with faculty and students, incidental observation of one course, the course syllabi, course descriptions and outlines.

The overall impression is that the faculty promote a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. The students appeared willing to participate locally in discussion and to contribute to the lesson. In the discussion with the EEC, students spoke positively of the relationships they have with the full-time faculty, as well as their accessibility to them both face-to-face and through email. The students reported that they did not have accessibility to the part-time faculty. The students expressed concern that the part-time faculty were not accessible in person or through e-mail. The EEC would like to acknowledge the motivation and commitment of the full-time faculty and their relationship to the students in the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level.

The teaching approaches used by the ECC&E faculty in the practical courses did not rely primarily on traditional, teacher-centered approaches. The ECC&E faculty model the kinds of teaching practices they expect their graduates to use in that they teach by example. However, it appears to the EEC that some courses, especially the theoretical ones, are lecture-driven and a number of them seem to not systematically include a wide range of constructivist teaching approaches including collaborative learning, problem based activities, group work, experiential practice (e.g., hands-on activities, field trips),

and approaches that cultivate higher order and critical thinking skills as well as meta-cognitive reflection. Both the faculty and students indicated that in many courses they are given the opportunity for interaction; however, it is not clear if this systematically includes the use of group projects, demonstrations, presentation of ideas, journaling and supplementary independent investigations/literature searches/reports. The high school education does not encourage this type of constructivist and student-centered approaches that requires them to play an active role in the learning process. The EEC feels; however, that the students they met could manage the requirements of this approach.

The EEC noticed that the faculty do not teach only in their area of expertise. As previously stated, there is one psychologist who also teaches developmental and clinical psychology in the Department. Similarly, the Sociology course is taught by a faculty member of another specialization. In addition, there are no specialists in Math education and Science education (perhaps because there are no such courses in the Department's curriculum). The faculty reported that the curricula (or content) of those courses are included in the methodology courses and are taught by the faculty who teach general teaching methodology.

### ***Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)***

The EEC would also like to note the utilization of the e-platform by a number of faculty. E-platform allows faculty members to not only distribute course syllabi, materials, PowerPoint presentations, other printed and audiovisual materials online, thereby making course materials and resources accessible to students at anytime, anyplace, and allows students to interact with each for other cooperative group work project and electronic submission of assignments. In the future, the Department might consider adding new dimensions to the e-platform, such as discussion forums (exchange of ideas or ask questions during practical training), teaching (e.g., courses that students need to take during their practical training) and evaluation procedures. The Department might promote a better and systematic training of the faculty in the innovative and pedagogical use of the ICT too. The use of electronic media and information technologies should be institutionalized to move the program into the digital age.

### ***Examination System***

Most courses are exclusively evaluated by one final exam; however, some courses utilize alternative methods of assessment, but this is the exception. Nonetheless, the examination procedures do not systematically use a wide range of assessment strategies that go beyond the standard end of the term examination. In practicum there are alternative ways of

assessment (portfolio, journals) and more use of tasks to demonstrate learning outcomes, acquisition of knowledge and skills and evidence based practice.

### ***Adequacy of Means and Resources Teaching staff/ student ratio***

One of the greatest challenges noted by the EEC is the teacher/student ratio, especially in field (or school-) experiences. It became apparent that the faculty is under increased pressure to maintain teaching quality standards in recent years due to budget cuts that eliminated all limited term teaching personnel, and especially field experience supervisors (επόπτες).

These hindrances lie beyond the control of the faculty. For example, every year the Ministry sets a number of students to be admitted into the program, which by far exceeds the number proposed by the Department. Furthermore, a rather large number of students is additionally transferred into the Department through other legislated venues.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Please comment on:

- Quality of teaching procedures
- Quality and adequacy of teaching materials and resources.
- Quality of course material. Is it brought up to date?
- Linking of research with teaching
- Mobility of academic staff and students
- Evaluation by the students of (a) the teaching and (b) the course content and study material/resources

### ***Quality of Teaching and Adequacy of Course Materials***

In the Department there are encouraging practices, especially in reporting and reflecting field practice activities. The EEC feels that the ECC&E faculty should adopt constructivist-oriented procedures when it comes to teaching. Although some practical lessons are well developed, an examination of the course syllabi and course outlines reflects that the theoretical lessons are not grounded in recommended practices advocated in the research literature. Nevertheless, the number of students and the adequacy of teaching materials are often challenging. In most cases approximately 100 - 130 students are registered in one class and the room has availability for only 50 students at most. This practice severely limits the ECC&E faculty's teaching practices and fosters absences from classes.

Evidently absent is also the use of other contemporary digital technologies, such as mobile computer labs, tablets, Smartboards or other digital tools that support and facilitate student engagement and interaction. As an example, student response systems (i.e. clickers) widely used abroad in large lecture halls to engage students are not available anywhere. Further, besides the computer laboratory at the library there is no access to other digital tools or the internet via WiFi. Certainly, there is a severe lack of appropriate resources, even in basic Internet connectivity in most classrooms.

### ***Linking Research with Teaching***

The EEC feels that there is not a strong emphasis in linking research and teaching – both among faculty and students. Faculty for example, could typically engage in the study of their practice, or what is referred to as scholarship of teaching, while students could frequently use research techniques such as observation, journaling and action research during their practicum experiences in the local school settings and thesis work. In a few courses students have to complete some observations, but these appear to be limited.

### ***Mobility of Academic staff and Students***

The ECC&E participates in the Erasmus program having connections to a number of other European Universities. Despite that, mobility of academic staff is quite limited primarily due to financial constraints. Many members of the staff reported that they travel to congresses and conferences on private expenses.

At the student level, mobility levels are higher for outgoing students, but not for incoming students (foreign students coming at the ATEI). Again, financial and language barriers are the two large inhibitors in student mobility.

### ***Teaching Evaluations***

Informal responses by students during the open-ended discussion with the EEC were highly positive. It is not clear to the EEC if a formal evaluation process is administrated to students at the end of each course or at the end of the academic either in a hard copy or electronic format.

## **RESULTS**

Please comment on:

- Efficacy of teaching.
- Discrepancies in the success/failure percentage between courses and how they are

justified.

- Differences between students in (a) the time to graduation, and (b) final degree grades.
- Whether the Department understands the reasons of such positive or negative results?

For the most part, students who register and get assessed in the ECC&E courses are successful. The mean grade average of graduating students is high (Over 8/10), following the trend in other pedagogical departments in Greece. The discrepancy between course failure and grades of graduation is an issue to be considered by the Department.

Time to graduation also varies largely given the flexibility offered to students by the Greek legislation in the past. Nevertheless, most students graduate within a reasonable timeframe with the great majority of students graduating within the timeframe (time set+2) recommended by the new law.

#### **IMPROVEMENT**

- *Does the Department propose methods and ways for improvement?*
- *What initiatives does it take in this direction?*

The ECC&E envisions improvement of teaching quality by adopting more student centred approaches. It is the EEC's belief that it would be good to integrate e-platform procedures into both teaching and its evaluation. The Department and the TEI try to find remedial solutions to ensure the quality of practicum supervision as the hiring of qualified personnel has become difficult due to severe budget cuts.

### **C. Research**

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

#### **APPROACH**

- *Research policy and main objectives.*

The Department neither has a formal research policy, mission nor annual benchmarks for research scholarship. However, according to the IER the research vision of the Department is based on its specific coursework, educational mission, research focus of individual faculty, and its future potential as a program defined by its organizational structure, objectives and goals. These procedures have not been applied to the Department of ECC&E to date. The Department's current research productivity is currently defined by individual faculty given their diverse research fields and theoretical backgrounds.

It is important to note that the bulk of the research in the Department is focused on fieldwork rather than on empirical research. As noted in the IER, one major hindrance is the fact that there are a lack of organized laboratories equipped to conduct basic research related to preschool and early childhood research. Moreover, empirical research is demanding in terms of the amount of time it requires faculty researchers to design, implement and complete research studies from start to finish and get them into publication.

The faculty in the Department of ECC&E carry heavy teaching loads to meet the demands of a class comprised of 120 students or more (per class). So that the quality of teaching instruction is not compromised in light of the number of students enrolled in a course and classrooms that only accommodate approximately 50 students or less, the faculty in the Department have voluntarily divided up their three (3) hour weekly (compulsory) theoretical lectures into two sections. As such, each course is taught twice weekly in two sections. That is, the identical lecture is presented to half of class in one section on one day and to the other half of the class in a second section on another day per week over the course of each semester. This commitment of faculty is commendable; however, it is not conducive to being productive in research. Moreover, many full-time faculty and lecturers also engage in administrative work concurrently with their teaching obligations without any course release. This creates an atmosphere where research becomes virtually impossible to conduct due to the demands of heavy teaching loads, a shortage of faculty

and staff to serve the needs of an undergraduate study body of approximately 777 students. Some research is undertaken with respect to faculty-mentoring students' senior thesis during the 8<sup>th</sup> semester of their undergraduate program. However, the topic and focus of the students' research theses are driven by the student and not the faculty member per se. As a result, the students' research theses are not always scholarly on an empirical level and are more descriptive studies or projects.

According to the IER and information provided during the site in a PowerPoint presentation, during the 2007-2014 academic period, the Department's six full-time faculty research productivity includes: includes a total of 18 publications in conference proceedings, 19 book chapters in edited volumes, 15 books, and 656 citations (using Google Scholar and a number of other search engines). In addition, there are 22 published scientific papers, 14 of which were published in peer-reviewed international journals. In addition, research projects by members of the Department since 2008 include coordination of 4 research programs and participation in 6 research programs. Partners in these research programs include Institutions of Higher Education in Greece and abroad.

Faculty in the Department also engaged in interdisciplinary collaborations with the following institutions: University of Thessaly; Democratic University of Thrace; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; Panteion University; and the University of Macedonia. Faculty also have partnerships with the following institutions: University Cyprus; University of Jyvaskyla in Finland); Roehampton University in the United Kingdom; University of Cambridge; and the University of London.

Tables 12.1 and 13.1 in the IER illustrate the number of scientific research publications and recognition of research projects during the 2007-2011 academic years for the six full-time academic faculty members in the Department.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

- *Research promotion and assessment, quality of support and infrastructure.*

There are no mechanism, opportunities or resources available to conduct research. Faculty conduct research and seek funding opportunities in their spare time, which is limited. Nonetheless, faculty search for funding opportunities on their own through the European Union, General Secretariat and other funding opportunities through their scientific associations and organizations. Faculty must be in constant contact with colleagues abroad and within the State to keep abreast of these potential funding opportunities. It is important to note that the ATEI-Thessaloniki provides limited funding

for faculty to attend or present at scientific professional conferences or for subscriptions to scientific journals and profession associations. Thus, faculty need to pay out-of-pocket to be active and participate in scientific conferences and professional activities.

During the site visit, there was some discussion by the President at ATEI-Thessaloniki and the faculty about their vision of implementing a post-graduate and doctoral (Ph.D.) program in the future. The President and faculty perceived this as a mechanism to enhance research opportunities and increase graduate student involvement in research. However, at this time, there are not clearly defined goals and objectives for implementing such a graduate degree given the State's economy and the significant lack of resources and faculty at ATEI-Thessaloniki and in the Department.

The EEC believes that presently the Department does not have the number of people in human resources (e.g., enough faculty mentors to advise), infrastructure (e.g., laboratories and equipment) and resources in general to implement the Ph.D. program at this time or in the near future.

## **RESULTS**

- *Research projects and collaborations, scientific publications and applied results.*

The dissemination of the research in the Department is achieved through individual faculty efforts, which includes writing books, published referred journal articles, organizing workshops and conferences, hosting of other research activities, collaborations with other researchers locally and within the State, internationally and efforts within the European Mobility Programs, such as the Lifelong Learning Program. According to the IER, approximately 50% of the Department's faculty participate in research initiatives.

The EEC observed that most publications (but not all) are in Greek. The EEC strongly recommends that the Department increase the number of publications in peer-reviewed international journals as this will contribute to the establishment of international collaborations and enhance the standing and reputation of the Department.

The EEC recommends that greater emphasis be given to applied research that focuses on theory driven and empirical studies regarding preschool and early childhood education.

**IMPROVEMENT**

- *Proposed initiatives aiming at improvement.*

The design, implementation, and objectives that characterizes the ECC&E program at the Technical Educational Institutes in the State present a challenge to those faculty who want to be active in research. The EEC suggests that the Department pioneer research that empirically identifies significant learning outcomes that contribute science regarding the development of young children from birth to 5-6 years of age and include student assistants.

The EEC recommends that the TEI Institution and the Ministry of Education provide the Department with adequate faculty personnel and staff so that they are able to engage in research, apply for research grants, and publish in high impact international journals.

### **D. All Other Services**

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

#### **APPROACH**

- *How does the Department view the various services provided to the members of the academic community (teaching staff, students).*
- *Does the Department have a policy to simplify administrative procedures? Are most procedures processed electronically?*
- *Does the Department have a policy to increase student presence on Campus?*

The Department does not have a formal policy to increase student presence on campus. Nonetheless, the Department's administrative services are efficient and serve the needs of the students. Sometimes; however, things are very bureaucratic and complicated. Some electronic processing of procedures are used for student enrolment, but most of the administrative tasks can be performed electronically to increase efficiency.

Despite the fact that there is no official policy on the matter of attendance in theoretical coursework, student presence is more frequent than expected. The Department organizes teaching in a way that enhances active participation. Supervision, regular collaboration in workgroups, study in the library and practical activities in laboratories are firmly integrated in undergraduate students' weekly program. However, in some cases if all students registered in certain courses attend the class, the room is too small to accommodate them.

The visit to the campus center was beneficial to the EEC in that it was evident that it serves as a location for students to socialize.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- *Organization and infrastructure of the Department's administration (e.g. secretariat of the Department).*
- *Form and function of academic services and infrastructure for students (e.g. library, PCs and free internet access, student counseling, athletic- cultural activity etc.).*

#### **Organization**

The administrative staff is situated in the same building with the faculty. It seems that

administration operates in a functional way.

### **Infrastructure**

- **Library:** The EEC visited both the central library of the Institution as well the School Library. The building and study rooms of both libraries are adequate. The book and journal (hard copies) collection is poor and there are very few recent published books. This is believed to be due to chronic lack of funding. The electronic databases and e-journals appear to be at very good level with accessibility to over 35,000 e-journals.
- **Study Halls:** A number of small educational study rooms exist in the library. There are no other study halls in the ATEI building.
- **Digital Tools/Internet:** Access to computers and other digital technologies is severely deficient. Besides the computer lab, which is used for instructional purposes, most computers are outdated and students have access only to a small number of computers in the library only during business hours from 7-3 p.m.. There is no wireless Internet connection in the building. More recently, the Department has started to make use of the e-platform, which allows students to access materials, PowerPoint presentations and to engage in online discussions. The use of e-platform could be used more widely used when the number of students does not allow for much personal tutor-student contact.
- **Facilities:** The number of lecture halls is adequate. The Department has special rooms for music, drama, early childhood education and teaching methodology. These rooms are well equipped with a sufficient amount of educational materials. Some lecture halls; however, are organised for traditional teaching (in some halls chairs are nailed on the floor). In those lecture halls, therefore, there is little availability of problem-based learning classrooms or other “smart” classrooms that can facilitate group work and student interaction.
- **Infrastructure:** The building infrastructure is acceptable, but needs updating. The faculty offices are satisfactory and well equipped.
- **Career office:** The institution has a very well organised and efficient career office. This office organised a series of events for students and graduates to help them prepare for their careers. It also keeps a database with all students and graduates and provides the link between graduates and the industry/market.
- **Erasmus office:** In ATEI functions an Erasmus office. It seems to be well organised and active and includes full-time administrators. However, they were downsized by one administrator in the past few years.

- **Counselling Services:** The Department does not have a psychological counselling services that offers help to students in need. In current times, counselling is a very important service to offer to students in light of the current hardship due to the side effects of the economy and its impact on the health and well being of the student's faculty and staff. It is suggested that the Department explore and advocate for such services on campus and orient students to this resources when they become available.
- **Special Needs:** With respect to academic and support services available to students with learning and other disabilities, the Department does not have a formal policy in place for students with disabilities (i.e., dyslexia and other disabilities), but some alternate forms of testing was reported by the students for those students with documented disabilities. A Learning Disabilities office for students with special needs does not exist on the ATEI-Thessaloniki campus. Students reported that students with special needs who have been formally assessed and have a certificate documenting their disability receive special accommodations from faculty in which they are enrolled. However, if students are not formally assessed and they don't have a certificate, they need to advocate on their own behalf with the faculty to receive special accommodations for their testing and course instruction materials. The Department and ATEI premises do not appear to be adequately handicap accessible (e.g., rest rooms that are handicap accessible).
- **Off-Campus Placements:** The St. Stylianos City Foundation Infant School is well organized and an excellent setting for placing students during practicum so that they can work with typically developing young infants and preschoolers, including those with delayed development and other special needs. This location provides an excellent experiential learning opportunity. In addition, the off-campus supervisors/mentors and administrators reported that they are eager to collaborate with the Department and work with their students for practicum. The off-campus supervisors/mentors/administrators looked forward to the annual continuing education workshops and conferences.

## RESULTS

- *Adequateness and functionality of administrative and other services.*

The ECC&E Department's administrative offices were clean, bright, and nicely furnished. The ECC&E faculty reported that the administrative staff were minimally adequate in serving the needs of a study body consisting of close to 1,000 active and inactive students.

The Department is operating with minimal resources, staff, faculty, and infrastructure.

The significant and drastic downsizing at the start of the academic year in the past five years significantly compromised ATEI's and the Department's ability to operate optimally.

### **IMPROVEMENTS**

- *Proposed initiatives aiming at improvement.*

It is suggested that the Department establish focused committees or task forces to promote standards for research benchmarking and start-up funds to support faculty research (e.g., research assistants). A student affairs committee is also suggested to advocate and better serve the needs of students.

### **Collaboration with social, cultural and production organizations**

- *Please, comment on quality, originality and significance of the Department's initiatives.*

A Department of ECC&E is asked to play a dual role within the ATEI, the community of Thessaloniki and Greece in general. The ECC&E is a Department that prepares preschool and early childhood educators. Therefore, the Department needs to prepare for the next generation of highly qualified preschool and early childhood educators. Second, the Department must help current educators and those working within early childhood education settings to advance their professional knowledge and skills and utilize theory-driven practices and instructional materials in a variety of early childhood education, family and community settings. This latter role sets the stage for a wide range of collaborations with a variety of early childhood education institutions, psychology, counselling, and family organizations. The nature of the collaboration varies, but often involves assistance in program development and instructional material development. Without doubt the Department serves an important role in community and contributes greatly to the society as a whole.

***E. Strategic Planning, Perspectives for Improvement and Dealing with Potential Inhibiting Factors***

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

- *Short-, medium- and long-term goals and plans of action proposed by the Department.*

Short-term and long-term strategic planning are currently lacking and should be an important activity of the Department. Specifically, the Department faculty should develop a vision that will guide the activities of its members in the next few years. These objectives should incorporate curriculum, potential future hires, building on its strengths as well as identifying areas that need to improvement. The EEC also believes that only after the Department has been able to strengthen its curriculum so that teaching is link to research and research is linked to practice, it may want to explore a masters or doctoral level program.

## ***F. Final Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC***

*For each particular matter, please distinguish between under- and post-graduate level, if necessary.*

- *The development and present situation of the Department, good practices and weaknesses identified through the External Evaluation process, recommendations for improvement.*

### **Conclusions and recommendations of the EEC**

#### ***1. Recommendations to the State***

The ATEI-Thessaloniki and the Department of ECC&E are in great need of resources in that there is a significant need to increase the number of faculty, administrators, and staff, build and improve the infrastructure on campus, to better serve the student body and the education they receive. This will enable the future generations of students at ATEI to be well-equipped to enter the workforce as contributing members of society.

#### ***Strengths of the Department***

The strengths of the Department includes the faculty, their commitment to teaching and meeting the needs of students, and generating research as much as possible. The Department is eager to implement their new curriculum in September 2014 and they envision that this will further enhance the curriculum. The Department has excellent relationships and collaborations with their alumni and off-campus supervisors/mentors/administrators. The relationship among the faculty themselves is cohesive. The faculty's relationship to the students, campus administration and staff, the off-campus collaborators (e.g., teachers, supervisors, etc.), the municipality, and to their national and international visibility as educators and scholars is commendable and an asset ATEI-Thessaloniki.

The number of faculty need to be increased and if this is not possible, the number of students entering the program annually need to be decreased.

#### ***2. Recommendations to the Department***

**Curriculum:**

It is recommended that the Department implement their new curriculum and organize the manner in which it will be systematically infused into the program.

It is recommended that the Department consider the recommendations of the EEC with respect to a broader curriculum that Math-content, Math Education (teaching of Math), Science Education, and Special Education and Learning Disabilities, Pediatrics, and a compulsory Foreign language course.

A greater focus on research so that students can be trained in collecting, analysing and interpreting research data.

Current academic and applied practices in the field of Education need to be evidence based and data driven.

The Off campus practicum recording booklet needs to be revised to better engage students on- and off-campus faculty and supervising mentors in better measuring learner outcomes and feedback.

Practicum Booklet- data outcomes measures.

**Teaching.**

Improve student accessibility to the part-time faculty.

Systematically engage students in a greater variety of learning activities to facilitate critical thinking and intellectual curiosity. Application of more student centered teaching approaches. Please see the EEC's recommendations in the Teaching Section.

Course syllabi and course outlines should all report aims and learner outcomes.

Greater use of electronic media and information technologies in coursework to facilitate learning and efficiency.

Greater focus on linking research and teaching among to applied practice

**Research.**

Develop benchmarks and Implement standards for research and scholarship,

Increase the number of publications in peer-reviewed international journals

### The Members of the Committee

1. **Dr. Mary Andrianopoulos** (Coordinator) \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Dr. Panayiotis Angelides** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Dr. Eleonora Papaleontiou-Louca** \_\_\_\_\_