

SPOTLIGHT ON GLOBAL I-O



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Greetings, *TIP* readers, and welcome to the October edition of the **Spotlight** column! Well, the deadline for SIOP submissions has recently come and gone. For some, it's now just a matter of waiting and wondering if the hours spent toiling over a beloved symposium or poster proposal will bear fruit. Are you looking for something to take your mind off of your proposal's impending fate? If so, this column is for you! This issue of the **Spotlight on Global I-O** offers an excellent overview of the past and present state of I-O psychology in the country of Greece. Read on for an informative account of our field's development in a truly historic corner of the world.

History and Development of Industrial Work & Organizational Psychology in Greece



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Aristotelis Kantas (not pictured)
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Greece is situated at the southeast of Europe. It has a very long and widely known past, making it one of the most historic countries in the world. The contemporary era of Greece began in the 1820s. Following the war of independence, Greece became an independent country in 1832. Greece is now considered a developed country. It is a full member of the European Union (EU) since 1981 and until very recently it was the only EU state in the Balkans region.

Short History of Psychology and I-O Psychology in Greece

The study of psychology from a philosophical perspective dates back to the ancient civilization of Greece. Some people consider Plato and Aristotle among the fathers of psychology. The more recent development of the field in Greece more or less followed the advancement of psychology in the rest of

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Europe. During the 19th century, the influences of philosophy and pedagogy in Greek psychology were considerable.

The early era of the field began in the 1920s with the establishment of the first psychological research laboratory at the School of Philosophy, University of Athens, by Professor Th. Voreas (Kazolea-Tavoulari, 2002). Nevertheless, the development of the field was very slow, at least until 1987 when the first department of psychology was established at the University of Crete, Rethymno. Until then, if someone wished to study psychology s/he had to study abroad or in local “universities,” which operated as branches of second-class British or U.S. universities. Following the establishment of the first psychology department, three more departments of psychology were created, two of them in Athens (University of Athens and Panteion University) and one in Thessaloniki (University of Thessaloniki). They all offer majors in psychology. There are also three more departments in the field of philosophy and education, which offer minors in psychology. However, their graduates cannot practice psychology according to the law.

The development of work and organizational psychology has its roots in the armed forces. We trace the first attempts of applying psychological principles at work to the Greek Army during the 1910s (Kazolea-Tavoulari, 2002). Similar to the U.S. and the UK, psychological testing was applied for the selection of air pilots. After World War II, these attempts increased with the establishment of research centers and educational activities in the Greek armed forces in order to deal with applied psychological problems (e.g., selection, assessment, leadership, motivation, etc.).

Education and Research

As earlier mentioned, there are four departments of psychology in Greece. The duration of undergraduate studies, for most degrees, is 4 years. It is very common for Greek graduates to continue their studies, obtaining a postgraduate degree (usually a 1-year master’s degree) from a university either in Greece or abroad (mostly in the UK). This is almost mandatory in psychology because the undergraduate studies do not provide any kind of specialization, and in order to obtain a specialization one has to follow a postgraduate degree. The four departments of psychology organize a number of postgraduate degrees in various fields (e.g., clinical, health, counselling, school, cognitive, etc.). The only postgraduate degree in I-O psychology available in Greece is the master’s degree in organizational and economic psychology, which is jointly run by the departments of psychology at the University of Athens and Panteion University. Unfortunately, it is short staffed. There is only one I-O psychology visiting professor teaching, and most of the courses have a theoretical and practical orientation geared towards social psychology.

The first faculty position in work and organizational psychology was established at the first department of psychology in Rethymno and was occu-

ped by the first well-known I-O psychologist in Greece, Professor Aristotelis Kantas. His influence on the field in Greece was significant. He was the first academic representing Greece in EAWOP (European Association of Work & Organizational Psychology; the European professional body of I-O psychologists) and ENOP (European Network of Organizational Psychologists). His textbook, first published in 1995, is still the main (if not the only) I-O psychology textbook used for undergraduate and graduate teaching. Following his footsteps, a number of his students have acquired significant academic or industry positions in the field. Sadly, Professor Kantas retired from academia recently.

Very few I-O psychology faculty positions exist in Greek universities today. Currently, there are only three I-O faculty members based in psychology departments (two at the University of Crete and one at the University of Thessaloniki). The two psychology departments of Athens operating the master's program in I-O psychology (mentioned earlier) do not have any permanent I-O faculty members. One reason could be that there is a perception among psychology faculty members that I-O is not really an independent field of study but rather a component of applied social psychology. Therefore, I-O psychology is often taught (if at all) as part of an advanced social psychology course. Accordingly, the respective faculty openings are in social/organizational psychology. For example, two of the existing faculty positions at the University of Crete and University of Thessaloniki are in the area of social and organizational psychology. Although this is common in other countries as well (e.g., Spain), it has not really seemed to help the development of I-O in Greece.

Another obvious reason for the preceding challenges involves the historic shortage of faculty with graduate education in I-O psychology. Very few people until now have obtained a PhD in I-O either in Greece or abroad. However, this is slowly changing. It should also be noted that a small number of I-O psychologists are based in business schools, where they teach I-O psychology, organizational behavior, and human resources management. Almost all undergraduate business-related studies entail courses in HRM and/or organizational behavior, and a few years ago the first and so far the only master's in HRM was established at the Athens University of Economics and Business. Contrary to the departments of psychology, Greek business schools have realized the necessity of recruiting I-O faculty members in order to teach and conduct research in the field. As a result, I-O is now a core area of research and study in most large Greek business schools.

Overall, research in the field of I-O psychology is at a relatively early stage of development. A major reason is the limited opportunity for research funding. This is a general problem for scientific research in Greece. As a result, most I-O psychology graduates interested in following an academic career have to continue their studies abroad, either in the UK or the U.S. (and recently the Netherlands as well). In a similar vein, there is a lack of peer-reviewed scientific psychology outlets in Greece. There is only one journal,

called *Psychologia-Psychology* (indexed in PsycInfo), which is well-respected among the Greek psychological community. However, it very rarely publishes I-O research. Regardless, most I-O psychologists prefer to publish their work in foreign peer-reviewed journals, mainly because of their increased visibility and scientific impact. A number of publications on I-O psychology topics from researchers based in Greece have recently appeared in prestigious journals (e.g., *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, etc.). These efforts, however, tend to be carried out by a handful of people. Finally, a small number of I-O psychologists based in Greece have also become active in European and U.S. I-O conferences, participating and presenting their work (e.g., at SIOP, AoM, ICAP, EAWOP, etc.) and initiating research programmes in I-O psychology in Greece (e.g., Centre of Research in Organizational Behaviour and Leadership at the Athens University of Economics and Business; <http://crob.dmst.aueb.gr/>).

Professional Practice

The practice of I-O psychology in Greece is tightly linked with both the development of the psychology field in general and also with the development of the human resources management (HRM) field in particular. The graduates of psychology departments are entitled by the Greek legislation to practice psychology (even without any official specialization). Thus, one can practice clinical psychology–psychotherapy and at the same time offer services in work and organizational psychology. This is a very serious problem. Unfortunately, the official state does not seem willing to take any steps in order to deal with this. The situation gets worse by the existence of three different psychological associations with conflicting interests in many cases: the Association of Greek Psychologists, the Panhellenic Psychological Association, and the Hellenic Psychological Society. The first two are mainly professional whereas the latter is mainly academic, since a PhD in psychology is a requirement for membership. Unfortunately, there is no professional body representing I-O psychology in Greece. Within the Hellenic Psychological Society there is a division of I-O psychology. However, it is inactive with very few members. A lot of the practicing I-O psychologists prefer to become members of the SHRM equivalent in Greece, the Greek Personnel Management Association (GPMA). Compared to its alternatives, GPMA tends to be more active and more effective in terms of professional networking.

Similar to other countries, I-O psychology in Greece is primarily an applied field of practice. Most I-O graduates are employed in private organizations mainly and in public organizations as well. The economic growth during the 1990s and until the 2004 Olympic Games assisted in the recruitment of large numbers of I-O psychologists, either within organizations' HRM departments or as HR/OD consultants for recruitment agencies, consulting

firms, training companies, and so forth. Thus, Greek I-O psychology graduates are often employed in positions related to selection, assessment, and testing. Unfortunately, the lack of accreditation in I-O psychology also creates problems regarding sensitive issues, such as the administration, interpretation, and feedback of/on psychological tests.

The Future of I-O Psychology in Greece

Greece has not only grown economically in the past few years, but it has also undergone important social, political, economic, and cultural changes. For example, almost one in ten Greek residents today is either an immigrant or from a non-Greek national origin. Psychology in general and I-O psychology in particular have been influenced by these changes but have yet to make an impact. We are optimistic about the future of I-O psychology in Greece, mainly from a professional point of view. Greek businesses have now realized the importance of human capital and the role that psychology can have in enhancing business performance. As a result, more companies have started asking for and will continue to seek the advice of well-trained I-O psychologists with a strong business sense. From an academic point of view, things will only look more promising when I-O psychology is considered an independent field of study and a major area of research and study both at the undergraduate and the graduate levels.

Concluding Editorial

So there you have it—an enlightening synopsis of I-O psychology in Greece to divert your attention from that conference proposal you just submitted. Speaking of which, I've heard that in ancient Greek civilization a "symposium" was a practice that nearly always involved libations, along with a healthy dose of intellectual debate and lounging around on couches (Nazaryan, 2009; Sansone, 2009). If you ask me, it's really no wonder why this custom morphed into its modern-day format. As if having Socrates in the audience wouldn't be nerve wracking enough, imagine trying to click through your PowerPoint slides while propped up on one elbow with a glass of wine in your hand. Sounds tricky.

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