

Family Involvement in Tertiary Education: Greek-Cypriot students have a say.

Loizos Symeou¹ & Eleni Theodorou

*Department of Education Sciences, European University Cyprus, P.O.Box 22006,
1516 Nicosia, Cyprus*

¹*Telephone, +357-22-713178, fax +357-22-559405, e-mail address:
L.Symeou@euc.ac.cy*

Abstract:

Most research in the field of family involvement has focused on lower levels of education, mainly primary and, to a lesser degree, secondary education with families from lower socioeconomic levels generally having less involvement in their children's education rather than more affluent families. This difference often leads to unequal educational outcomes and life chances. However, the migration of family involvement in increasingly higher levels of education, including that of higher education; the increasing demand for tertiary education in light of its importance for social mobility and equity; and research evidence showing that students from socially underserved groups have less participation in higher education and are also at higher risk for dropping out, all speak to the importance of investigating phenomena of family involvement also within higher education. This study seeks to investigate the perspective of students on the issue of family involvement as this occurs at a private university in Cyprus. The data reported in this paper are part of a larger project employing a mixed methods approach to examine whether (and if so, the extent to which) the involvement of families in undergraduate students' university education in Cyprus influences their academic experiences. For the purposes of the study, 'family involvement' is meant to signify any type of involvement from member(s) of a student's family in any matter associated with the student's university studies and which is undertaken to support them. The term 'family' refers to one's partner, guardian, or adult(s) with whom one is biologically related. Data for the part of the study presented here were collected through individual interviews with twelve purposefully selected undergraduate students of all years of study in an effort to investigate in depth the rationale, nature, and understandings of their family's involvement in their tertiary education from their perspective. The analysis of the data depicts the relationships between university and families and sheds light on their complexities in terms of the ideologies, power relations, and meanings involved. Such an account offers a fruitful avenue in describing, understanding, and seeking common ground between higher institutions and students' families for the purposes of providing effective academic support and ensuring equal educational opportunity in higher education, while further clarifying the roles of involved agents, namely higher education faculty and administration, students and their parents.