

# Occupation Structure and Career Choice vs Education Development and Training Level: A Presentation of Theoretical Approaches

Efrosini Pafili

Episkopio, Syros, 84100, Greece

E-mail: efipaf@hotmail.com

John Mylonakis (Corresponding Author)

10, Nikiforou Str., Glyfada, 166 75, Athens, Greece

E-mail: imylonakis@vodafone.net.gr

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## Abstract

The employment of individuals, in all societies and all times, was the focal point of social structures. The economic theory provides the ability to understand the economic laws that are running in a society and gives us much knowledge how to significantly alter the economic structure of society or to bring about the desired changes. There is a causal relationship between the variables that play a role in choosing the level of the education and the occupation, such as social environment and structural factors. The people make their educational choices depending on their social integration, whether their expectations for better education and training dominate all the social levels. Overall, the range of choice of profession by women is limited because of the prevailing social attitudes and the employment-related.

**Keywords:** Human resources, Education, Employment economic theory, Industrial society, Social structures, Labour organization, Training system

## 1. Introduction

Human capital is considered as the stock of competences, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value. It is acquired by the individual with education and professional experience. In order for the individual to use properly his education, to gain the proper experience and offer in the development of the society, the primary step is the right choice of the profession to pursue. The employment of individuals, in all societies and all times, was the focal point of social structures. In particular, the distribution of the men in various professional roles and developments over time identified the character of each society (Filiás, 1978).

The economic theory provides the ability to understand the prevailing economic laws in a society and gives much knowledge how to significantly alter the economic structure of the society or to bring about the desired changes. For the economist, the primary issue is not to interpret a situation, but to be able to intervene and change it, according to his knowledge on economic laws. The economic behavior of people is only one part of the overall behavior, which, despite the fact that it is decisive, it is independent of their behavior in other manifestations of collective life. For example, people are organized in societies with political authority, customs, laws, etc. Therefore, economics, in an attempt to explain the economic life, cannot ignore the findings of other sciences which finally enrich it and thus increases its ability to interpret them. If an individual wants to be economically active in a social living environment, the question of how this is affected by the education he has received.

In many empirical studies in different societies (Blau and Duncan, 1967) and in Greece (Kassimati, 1998), the primary role that education plays in the careers of individuals has been proved. It is well known that there is a very strong relationship between the level and type of education and the profession that the person practices. For this reason, the systems related to education and employment is more strongly correlated to the industrial society and the reforms made in a system inevitably reflect and entail reforms in the other. By this reasoning, the choice of the level and type of education could be considered as primary and that of the profession as secondary.

The scope of this paper is to present the theories examining if there is a causal relationship between the variables that play a role in choosing the level of the education and the occupation, giving emphasis to the Greek society and market. According to Kassimati (1998), these variables could be generally divided into two main categories (Diagram 1): factors belonging to the social environment of the individual and structural factors related to social structures and significantly affect the choices.

## **2. Micro Social and Economic Environment**

### *2.1 Family Influence*

Family plays the main role in choosing the level of education, since it is the main forum through which the person has its first contact with the social environment. Through the family derives its first impulses, aspirations, ambitions and grow as a person. According to the studies by economists and sociologists, the role of the family is summarized in main categories, including: reproductive, economic, educational, and psychological, which will affect the individual, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly to its occupational choices (Mousourou, 1989; Psacharopoulos and Kazamias, 1985). More specifically:

The parents belong into two major systems from the child's point of view: in the family and the economy. This means that they will influence to the child, consciously or unconsciously, social values and trends; thus, they create aspirations and develop highly educational and occupational aspirations for their children. The child gain experience by understanding the advantages and disadvantages of the professions of its parents.

This could explain the widely spread phenomenon of coincidence among the occupation of the parents, and especially the father, with that of children. In addition, in the Greek society parents have a dominant position in the organization of the life for their children. Surveys on industrial workers (Mousourou, 1989; Psacharopoulos and Kazamias, 1985) show that only 5% of questioned parents accepted that they would leave the choice of profession to their children.

Suggesting the importance of the family inducement for further studies and careers of the individuals, Bowles (1972) noted that the socio - economic status is positively correlated to plans for post-high school studies, while Wright (1979) argued that education and occupation of the father affects the educational aspirations of children. It appears that children develop similar ambitions and expectations with those of their parents, because they come from environments that have similarities in education, profession or religion with them.

Kassimati and Moustaka (1984) demonstrated that the paternal encouragement to educational projects of the children is associated more strongly with their decisions than their current socio-economic level or their intelligence.

The family structure is the main source of inequality in the society, as its effect on mental capacity, vocational rehabilitation and the financial security of individuals is long-term. Trends in social inequality are influenced more by the social background of the individual (parental occupation), rather than by their own educational attainment, if compared with the same educational level.

### *2.2 Individual's Social Entrance*

The family is a team that affects the education and, therefore, the career choices of individuals. It is important to remember that Boudon (1973), starting from the fact that the choice of the level and type of education is the first step of the choice of profession, identified three theories related to the class membership of individuals:

The theory of values: according to which an important factor for the unequal educational opportunities is caused by the different value systems prevailing in different social classes. Hyman (1953) showed that children belonging to higher social classes choose occupations that could deeply satisfy personal interests, as opposed to children from labour - agricultural classes, and choose professions which secured better wages.

The theory of social status: according to Keller and Zavalloni (1964) two people from different social status may have the same ambitions to achieve the same social level, but their origin plays an important role in achieving the ultimate common goal, due to the differences by each person to reach that level.

The theory of culture: according to which inequalities in educational opportunities is a consequence of the differences in the cultural opportunities for any family, due to its social origin.

From the above it is understood that education (type and level) is the preamble of profession. As Gramsci (1970) states "every individual is at the same time trainer and trainee". The different levels of social values prevalent in social levels or classes reflect on the opportunities that people have to achieve specific levels of education.

In modern Greece with the nine-year compulsory education system, formal selection starts from high school and continue in the higher education (universities) where the number of students is decreased (about 1/3 of candidates go finally to the University). Data from Greece (Noutsos, 1979) suggests that selection systems at all levels of

education, particularly in the higher, favoring the upper class. These systems are based on the academic performance of the students at all levels and the multitude of social factors (gender, geographical region, social origin, etc.).

A survey by the National Centre for Social Research in Greece (Papageorgiou, 1974), demonstrated that children of higher professional classes perform better in elementary and secondary education than ones of workers and farmers. Also, Frangoudaki (1980) observed that students come to school with the educational opportunities which is given to them by the social class of their parents; the school is also made to grade the social benefits as a natural genius. If a linear function is introduced of the educational system in relation to the entrance of individuals in the society, appears the following mechanistic scheme: entrance of individuals in the society → certain level of education.

### *2.3 Social Values by Gender*

The social perception of the professional roles of men and women are different and the person's gender is a critical determinant for the choice of profession. The separation of roles (male - female) does not indicate equal division of labour among men and women. However, it indicates a hierarchical classification of professional roles, whereby the male work has a great impact on the social formations and, therefore, it is assessed as substantial, while the female work, as complementary and supportive of the male one, is of limited significance.

Machung (1987) states that the division of labour between male and female is the mechanism that fosters mutual state of dependence between genders. Surveys conducted in Greece (Kassimati., 1998) have shown that the social impact on women's employment influences the decision of women to work and the choice for this profession.

## **3. Macro Social - Economic Environment**

One group of theories on education and choice of profession, distinguishes those that focus on the individual and their aspirations (such as theories of Ginsberg, 1972, and Super, 1951) and others mentioned about the social structures and opportunities to ensure it (like the theory of Roberts, 1968).

The social organization of labour and power structures of society in which the person lives, identify important motivation and efficiency in the process of choice. Besides micro-society and the environment in which the person grows, there is only a "thumbnail" of the society into which develops its activity (Hirszowicz, 1981). To date analysis has shown the important role of the social environment of the individual plays in choice of its profession.

However, many difficulties are presented, in the adjustment between the education system and the world of work, focusing on two key points:

The magnitude of the problems that arise for young people from choosing the education and future careers.

Questions relating to the functions of education and social integration and attitudes, attitudes of the people to another type of education.

The above questions have different meanings depending on the examined society. For example, the more developed a society, the more complex mechanisms are created at the labour market and on the other hand, the person needs better training in order to confront and cope the best way to labour market requirements.

### *3.1 Educational Level and Labour Market*

The educational system of a country is directly related to the level of development and affects the career choices of individuals. Any improvement in skills at certain levels of development of the country means improvement of education and skills; to let this happening in a field, subsequent corresponding changes throughout the education system should made.

To ensure the country's economic improvement, we need not only enough funds, natural resources etc., but mainly it requires well-trained workforce. And to do this, the same educational infrastructure to properly trained human resources is needed. The preferences of individuals are formed in this macroeconomic climate determining for particular levels and types of education and lead to the professional roles.

### *3.2 Training System and Employment*

Musgrave (1967) observed that the educational system is not only a cognitive system but rather a social system, which not only reflects a certain epistemological classification of knowledge, but is mainly a knowledge assessed hierarchy and shared by certain social criteria.

The educational system of a country is in a main point the cause and the effect of the level of economic and social growth. By creating opportunities and meeting with them in the labour market plays a key role in the process of choice of profession of the person and its subsequent position in the society. At individual level there are desires and preferences that influence the choice of level of education and specialization and these factors are mainly exogenous to the individual.

Diagram (2) presents a model process of intentional or unintentional career choices of candidates for higher education. But there are equal opportunities for access to higher education? On the one hand, the social context gives the impetus for higher - highest education by social climbing and on the other puts barriers to those who do not belong to the privileged social levels, which can be overcome only by great effort. Greece offers the possibility of higher education only into 29% of the people who ask for it. Of course, not everyone who wants to enter the higher education is suitable for this, because the ambition is not always feasible and as observed by Keller and Zavalloni (1964) not differentiated from the social level.

Given that the access to the higher education (Universities and Technological Institutions) is the result of the individual school performance - which in turn is, mainly, due to the student's society class membership - then the distinction among students of cities and villages, as far as, the school performance is important.

According to the theory of Bowles (1972), unequal education opportunities not only lead to uneven distribution of the student population according to their social background, but also to the reproduction of social division of work and vice versa.

Educational inequality has not only structural role in the society, but also in the way how the big cities of Greece were built. During the last decades, Athens has been the centre of the internal migrants and today is the centre of social and intellectual life. Due to this, the most of Technological Education Institutes (TEI) and Universities were established in Athens. When in the 60's other University departments began to operate outside Athens, they were established again in the other big cities. This was something that reflected the educational opportunities that had the people and by extension and their professional choices, since they don't have the same opportunities in education people remain in large cities with people who do not live in them.

The choice of a profession that makes a person comes through the channel of the education; and the training must be related to the labour market, because during its training the person is influenced by the labour market's circumstances. The job post and the prospects of social and economic rise that this involves are some of the criteria that are taken into account from the individual when it selects the level of skills and education to follow. The problem, of course is that the individual during his training, decides according to the data of that time and consequently this generates some questions, such as:

how could education keep up with the changes created in the labour market by the time?

how could education adapt to future developments in the labour market in order to prepare the individuals properly?

Questions of this type necessitate a close relationship between education and labour market conditions.

### *3.3 Education and Employment Level*

To have the appropriately trained personnel in appropriate positions, an institution of vocational guidance should be created and operate. Recently, this kind of guidance acts in schools. Its aim is to look through the wide range of occupations that match those on the slope and the potential of the individual, and thus to secure a smooth passage from school to working life. This could be achieved (Tsoukalas, 1977) by:

Giving to the person all the information about the training, the professions in the labour market and the economic needs.

Training individual in making decisions.

Informing the individual on the transitional stages that should follow for the occupational rehabilitation.

In this way the school's vocational guidance, leads to the development of the student's personality, to a better knowledge of the conditions of the training and work and to discover the factors that will allow him to seek work more easily.

## **4. Conclusions**

The economic theory provides the ability to understand the prevailing economic laws in a society and gives much knowledge how to significantly alter the economic structure of the society or to bring about the desired changes. Family plays the main role in choosing the level of education, since it is the main forum through which the person has its first contact with the social environment.

In many empirical studies in different societies and in Greece, the primary role that education plays in the careers of individuals has been proved. The educational system of a country is in a main point the cause and the effect of the level of economic and social growth.

People make their educational choices depending on their social integration, whether their expectations for better education and training dominate all the social levels. Overall, the range of choice of profession by women is limited because of the prevailing social attitudes and the employment-related.

According to the social environment where the individual lives, the standards of each gender and how they apply to everyday life are different. The level of development of the country, affects, also, in many ways the choice of the profession.

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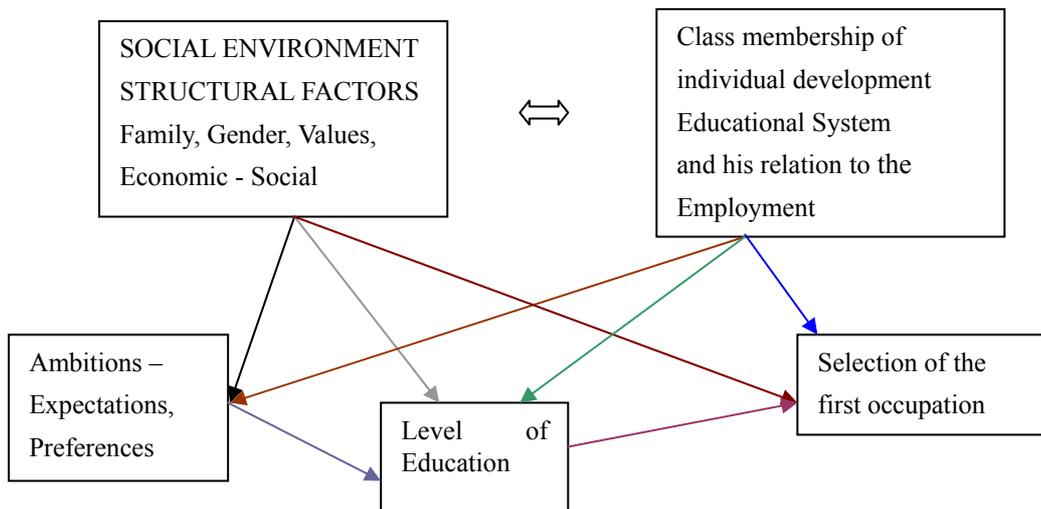


Diagram 1. Model of the process of the selection of the first occupation

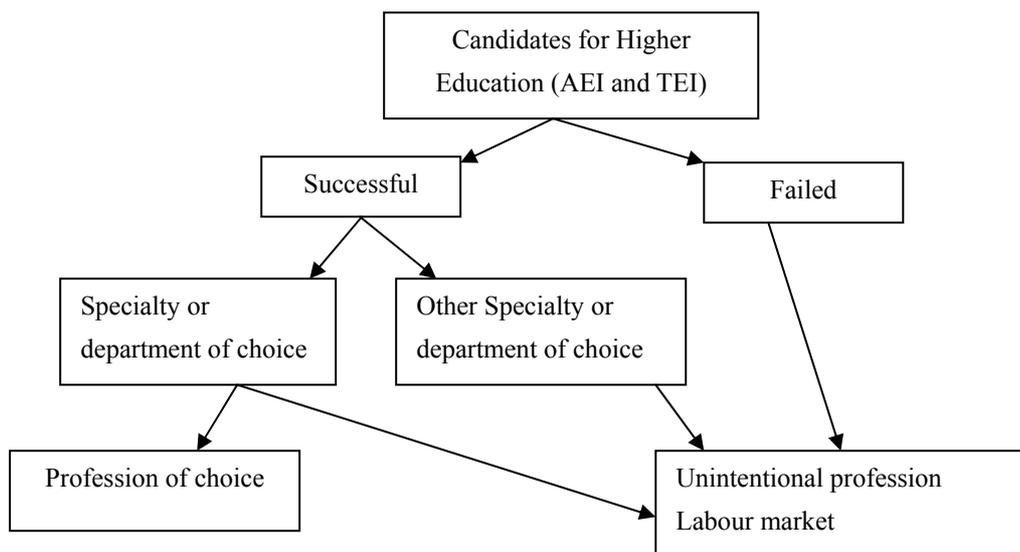


Diagram 2. Model process of intentional or unintentional career choices of candidates for higher education