

Factors of career choice

[Business](#), [Career](#)



Introduction

“ The occupational choice debate is concerned with the degree of choice individuals have over their eventual occupation. ” (Module Handbook) The process of occupational choice is “ psychologically based and examines the way in which the individual develops and passes through a series of stages during which the self-concept grows as abilities, aptitudes and interests develop. ” (Watson T. J. 2008) This assignment is attempting the factors that may prevent or affect people’s occupational choices and how we can overcome them.

Role

Role plays an important part in human-being, it can influence a person’s behaviour and decision making. Role may be achieved or ascribed. “ The concept of an achieved and ascribed role is important in occupation choice. ” (Module Handbook) Stark (2007) states that “ An achieved role is a position that a person assumes voluntarily which reflects personal skills, abilities, and effort. An ascribed role is a position assigned to individuals or groups without regard for merit but because of certain traits beyond their control.

(wikipedia) An achieved role can be changed and gained through putting efforts by a person, e. g. educational qualifications. On the other hands, an ascribed role is unchangeable. This role is assigned to you by your parents or family, e. g. height, gender, rich or poor, status, etc. The role of a person can influence one’s occupational choice. In general, people who have advantages in their ascribed role, it perceived to have advantages in

their career path or development as well. Some people can act as model, and some cannot, because of the height of a person.

Fortunately, people's achieved role can break this normal pattern. If people can put efforts and reach to higher educational level, they can also earn the opportunity on their career development and work as middle or top level management in a company. People cannot change fundamental elements but can change their path through their effort. Thus, people's achieved and ascribed role can alter the decision when they are making decision on occupational choice.

Objective and Subjective Constraints

If we wish to produce a model or theory which identifies the various factors that influence the individual's occupational choice, we must consider both objective and subjective constraints. The individual has certain tangible resources such as cash, skills, knowledge or physique, which are objective constraints. The individual has certain intangible minds of motives, interests and expectations, such as to achieve power or gain job satisfaction, which all are subjective constraints. These are psychological factors of personal achievement.

Key Theories of Occupational Choice

Developmental Theory

Eli Ginzberg (1951) defines " an individual never reaches the ultimate decision at single moment in time but through a series of decisions over [time]. " (module handbook) It is the Developmental Theory of occupational choice. " E. Ginzberg looks at occupational choice as a cumulative process of

decision making, taking place in three stages closely linked to those of emotional and intellectual development. Fantasy choice is followed by a period tentative choice, then finally there is a period of realistic choice. ” (White S. 968) People’s occupational choice do not occur only at the moment on the decision making, but “ is an extended process which may begin as early as ten or twelve and continue well beyond the choice of a first job. ” (White S. 1968) Fantasy choice is occurring at the age between 6-11 when the children have no ideas about the real-life situation, all things are fantastic and delivered to them by their parents. When the children grow at the age of 11-17, the knowledge of the real world increases, they aware of themselves and the outside environment, and they makes tentative choice on the basis of their own interests.

Structural Theory

The structural theory is that the entry points of the occupational structure are impacting on ambition of people. According to Keil et al, they include family background and value, neighbourhood and peer group, school and education, gender and race.

RIASEC Model

Holland (1973/1985) developed a psychological approach “ to identify people’s occupational preferences and helps fit a person’s choices and organizational characteristics. ” (module handbook) It is referred to as RIASEC.

RIASEC indicates Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional. By the research of Taiwan’s high school students, we found

that “ the R type is a very typical male-oriented type of career” and “ girls, on the other hand, were more interested in the A-type fields and tended to choose artistic fields as their careers. ” (Tien H. L. , Wang Y. F. and Liu L. C. 2009)

Factors and Obstacles affecting Occupational Choice

People do not enter the occupational structure with equal opportunities.

There are many factors and obstacles that can influence the choice-making on occupation of people, we are now focus on the factors in structural theory, including family and class, neighbourhood and peer group, school and education, race and gender.

Family and Class

When the children at the age of 6-17, which is in the stage of fantasy choice and tentative choice, they depend on their parents mostly. Thus, the parents’ expectations for educational achievement, beliefs and behaviors will affect the children’s future development.

The Parent Socialization

Model developed by Eccles and colleague (1982) has highlighted the important role parents play in the development of children’s achievement choices. The belief of parents “ will then influence parenting behaviors and expectations, which, in turn, will affect child outcomes such as educational and career choices. ” (Jacobs, J. E. , Chhin C. S. and Bleeker M. M. 2006)

Moreover, as the family background of a person on his or her ascribed role cannot be changed, family network and status also play important role on occupational choice. The structure of a family an individual faced when he or

she was growing up may affect the individual's social skills and lead to human capital investments" and "parental education appears to have an indirect effect on children's occupational status through children's education." (Tsukahara, I. 2007) Grieco (1987) shows "how this can be helpful both to the employee, who gains support from family members both inside and outside work and is sustained in steady employment, and for employers, whose recruitment costs are kept low and who can look to employees' relatives to help train them and teach them to "fit in". (Watson T. J. 2008) Even not every people will choose the same career as their parents, most people appear to have a high probability to make similar choices. Rather, parents' education also appears to have an indirect effect on children's occupational choices through the children's education. For example, if the parents perceived a positive effect on the professional occupations, the children will then also have a positive effect on the professional occupations in future.

Neighbourhood and Peer Group

People can enjoy social experience through the contact of neighbourhood and peer group, such as friends and teachers.

As these peer groups always recognize in people's earlier stage, such as school life, they have long-term consequences for one's belief and value. "Teachers, parents, peers, and others may influence youths' achievement and interests long before educational and occupational decisions are made." (Jacobs, J. E. 2006) These peer groups can provide people social support and encouragement; however, the groups may also provide somehow of negative impact if wrong perception and information are provided.

Education Formal schooling operates alongside the general cultural and family socialization process. " (Watson T. J. 2008) Willis (1977) states education " as a form of preparation for the way those particular individuals will need to live with their subservient roles once they enter paid employment. " (Watson T. J. 2008) The jobs which people choose were influenced by the level of educational qualifications they achieved. The more professional of the jobs, the more skills and abilities are needed, and the more rewards (both monetary and non-monetary) can earn.

On the contrast, there are more limitations on occupational choice for people who have lower educational level.

Race

Race or Ethnic Discrimination is also undoubtedly playing a major role in occupational attainment. The research project conducted by Cardoso P. and Marques J. F. (2008) about The Perception of Career Barriers Inventory found that African and Afro Portuguese students score significantly higher than Euro-Portuguese students on Ethnic Discrimination.

The Ethnic Discrimination " results highlight how, at the early stages of development and at crucial career decision moments, when these beliefs are structured, a negative influence on vocational behaviour development can occur. " (Cardoso P. and Marques J. F. 2008) Melamed (1995) concluded that " discrimination accounted for between 55% and 62% of the variance in the differential career success of men and women in a British sample. " (Brown D. 2002) Although the wide-spread prevalence of race discrimination in most

countries, the limitations and difficulties in career choices and development of these minority groups are still high. .

Gender

Gender will be a major factor in the career choices. Due to the role conflicts between men and women, a study found that “ women in Israel, Germany, the United States, and Japan assigned lower importance to the centrality of work in their lives than did men..... this is the result of women’s orientation to other life roles, primarily because of women’s concern regarding participation in the family role. ” (Brown D. 2002) By the survey report of “ Third Quarter Economic Report 2010” in the section of “ Labour Force Participation Rates by Sex” (www. enstatd. gov. hk), the data shows the participation rates of male employees is 68. 9% and female employees is 52. 2% in the third quarter of 2010. The number of women who engaged in labour force is still lower than men. We are now analyzing the gender by three sections: horizontal and vertical segregation, pay, and hours worked.

Horizontal and Vertical Segregation

Horizontal segregation is the term “ used to describe the tendency to discover men and women in different types of occupation. (Module Handbook) For example, by the survey of “ annual percentage of male and female managers by job function”, “ female managers are mainly in the functions of “ personnel & training” and “ conference & banqueting”, whilst management posts in the areas of “ property & security”, “ food& beverage”, and “ control &finance” are mostly held by men” in 1999 in Hong Kong. (Ng C. W. and Pine R. 2003) By the survey report of “ Women and Men

in Hong Kong: Key Statistics” in the section of “ Employed Persons by Industry and Sex” (www. censtatd. gov. k), the female employed persons were mainly engaged in the public administration, social and personal services sector (35. 9%), while data of the male employed persons was different, with the financing, insurance, real estate, professional and business service sector being the largest sector (18. 2%) in 2009. Vertical segregation is the term “ used to describe the situation where, the higher one progresses in an organizational or professional hierarchy, the fewer the number of females one encounters. ” (Module Handbook) Morrison et al. 1987) coined a term of “ glass ceiling” to “ describe the difficulties women face in climbing to the top of the corporate ladder. ” (Ng C. W. and Pine R. 2003) Although the percentage of women who studied law and medical and health subjects is over 60%, the opportunities to promote is still obstruct by the “ glass ceiling”, such as traditional value and family responsibility. (Ming Pao Newspaper) For example, by the survey of “ annual percentage of male and female managers by job level”, “ only 7. 2% of senior General Manager positions were held by women” in 1999 in Hong Kong. Ng C. W. and Pine R. 2003) According to the record of Hong Kong Listing Companies, there is only 9% of women in the top management level who mostly were entered by the role of family members. (Ming Pao Newspaper) By the survey report of “ Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics” in the section of “ Employed Persons by Occupation and Sex” (www. censtatd. gov. hk), the figures show there are 96, 500 women and 229, 800 men in the Managers and Administrators role, while there are 398, 800 women and 149, 600 men in the Clerks role.

Pay

“ Full-time working women earn 82. % of men’s hourly pay. ” (Module Handbook) According to “ Women and Men in Hong Kong: Key Statistics” in the section of “ Median Monthly Employment Earnings of Employed Persons by Age Group and Sex”, the median monthly earnings of female employed persons in Hong Kong was HK\$8, 500 in 2009 while that for males was HK\$12, 000. (www. censtatd. gov. hk). Over 70% of people indicated that Hong Kong is still have sex discrimination in career environment which men’s paid are more than women even they are on the same positions.

Hours Worked

Even the labour market participation of women has increased dramatically in many countries, the hours worked of women are still lower than men due to the different orientations to work. Hakim (1996, 2000) states that “ whereas in general men prefer to work, women show a heterogeneous set of work-life orientations: some women prefer to work, others want to stay at home and almost half of them prefer to combine work and family life. ” (Doorewaard H, Hendrickx J and Verschuren P. 004) The data indicated that although many women are entered or re-entered into the labour market, they are still want to have work-life balance, especially for those women who are married and have children, it is also the barrier of women in the career path both actually or in people’s traditional perceptions.

Orientations to Work

Orientations to work to different people are varying. People seem to be motivated to work by a mixture of options, e. g. earning money, developing their careers, gaining status, etc.

According to Crompton and Harris (1998), “ it is not only influenced by someone’s own choice and motivation, but also by the constraints of the situations in which one lives and works. ” (Doorewaard H, Hendrickx J and Verschuren P. 2004) It can simply distinguish into three types of work orientations: job orientation, money orientation and people orientation. Watson (1994) said “ life circumstances and the specific circumstances prevailing in the work situation influence what they are looking for and what they expect to get. (Martin E. 2004) Hence, orientations to work are also barriers to occupational choice if the job itself cannot fit in one’s orientation.

Solution of Constraints and Obstacles to Occupational Choices

It is no doubt that the work pattern and norm is constantly changing around the world, however, this change can help to overcome some of the constraints of occupational choices. The past few decades have been marked by a significant growth in women’s labour force participation in most countries. Although women play a stronger economic role than in the previous decades, men are usually the primary breadwinners in families. Women, who function as secondary earners, tend to have part-time and other nonstandard employment. ” (Kan M. Y. 2007) Those nonstandard employments, such as part-time job, temporary jobs, psychological contract,

will be more common in the future work. “ The nature of formal contracts has altered, with more short-term contracts..... sub-contracting and out-sourcing arrangements have become more common and are part of a set of strategic HRM options. (Westwood R. , Sparrow P. and Leung A. 2001) Furthermore, the increasing of feminine management style in both government and private companies where a more flexible and “ feminine” approach to management, such as flexible work family arrangements, “ Family Friendly Working Practices” in Hong Kong. This style helps women who want to balance between work and family life. Additionally, the work pattern of “ 10 years in employment and 10 years out” which is a flexibility approach for people who want to have a break for few years and return to work, e. . female returners who seek to re-enter the workforce after a few years of unpaid care-taking responsibilities. At the time of making occupational choice, people are still young and lack of knowledge and experience. “ People make choices based on imperfect knowledge and uneven distribution of knowledge and at a young age. ” (Module Handbook) To prevent in making wrong decision and lack of confidence from the students, school and teachers can arrange some experienced people to share their real experience and give more support to them.

Luzzo (2000) proposes “ to help students think about the role that perceived barriers play in the career planning and exploration process, and to identify effective resources and strategies for coping with such barriers. ” (Cardoso P. and Marques J. F. 2008)

Conclusion

Every people have different choices on career and different orientations to work. And, there are some subjective and objective variables affecting the process of choosing the career. People have to identify them clearly in hope to find the most suitable job for them which is fitting with their interests, intentions and abilities. owever, those obstacles can be overcome through the changing work pattern and work management. In fact, many of these trends of future work are already with us today. We are all in the moment of changing atmosphere.

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