



THE PROBLEM OF CAREER CHOICE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCES FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This article analyzes the issue of career choice within the context of systemic inconsistencies between the education system and labor market, individual psychological preparedness, and social factors. A comparative analysis is conducted between Uzbekistan and developed countries such as the USA, Germany, and Japan. Based on survey data, analytical tables, and diagrams, the study identifies key obstacles to appropriate career choice, including parental pressure, social stereotypes, lack of information, poor psychological readiness, and market mismatch. The paper concludes with practical and strategic recommendations for improving vocational guidance systems.

Keywords: Career choice, education system, psychological preparedness, labor market, motivation, youth, vocational guidance, international experience.

Introduction

In the 21st century, education has become the central driving force of societal development, serving as a key component of human capital. Particularly, the process of career choice within the education system is increasingly regarded not only as a determinant of individual success but also as a crucial factor shaping a country's socio-economic progress. A correct career orientation is directly related not only to individual motivation and abilities, but also to the efficiency of the educational system, the availability of psychological support, and the alignment with the real needs of the labor market.



In today's globalized and information-driven society, the issue of career choice has gained significant urgency. According to statistical data, 20–35% of young people in developed countries are compelled to change their chosen profession after completing their education. This phenomenon reflects, on the one hand, the mismatch between the education system and labor market demands, and on the other hand, the presence of psychological and social challenges in making informed career choices.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, this problem also manifests itself with distinct socio-economic and psychological characteristics. In the national education strategy, career guidance is considered a priority area. However, in practice, many young people experience a state of motivational dissonance between their chosen field of study and the actual profession they enter.

This article presents a systematic analysis of the issue of career choice in developed countries (such as the USA, Germany, and Japan) as well as in the context of Uzbekistan. Through this analysis, the paper examines, on a scientific basis, the structural deficiencies of the education system, the level of psychological preparedness, the effectiveness of career guidance services, and the compatibility with actual labor market needs.

The problem of career choice is analyzed in this article as an essential structural issue of the education system. The research is based on a scientifically grounded methodology utilizing systematic, comparative, and psychological-analytical approaches. Through these approaches, the specific features, structures, and outcomes of the career selection process in Uzbekistan and in several developed countries (notably the USA, Germany, and Japan) are compared and evaluated.

The systematic approach enabled the study of career choice not merely as an individual decision, but as a complex interaction among factors such as personality, family, educational institutions, state policy, and the labor market. The comparative approach made it possible to contextualize Uzbekistan's experience within international practices, particularly those of leading European and Asian countries. Meanwhile, the psychological approach focused on internal determinants of career choice, such as personal motivation, value hierarchies, levels of psychological adaptability, self-awareness, and mechanisms of self-evaluation.

The sources used in the analysis were categorized into the following main groups: reports and statistical data from international organizations (UNESCO, OECD,



ILO); official publications of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations; recent scholarly articles (based on Scopus and Google Scholar databases); as well as findings from the author's observations and interviews conducted in various educational institutions. Special attention was given to the current state of career guidance practices, available resources, and psychological counseling services in general secondary and vocational education institutions operating in Uzbekistan. The evaluation indicators selected for this research were clearly defined and grounded in theoretical frameworks, each supported by modern psychological and pedagogical methodologies. These indicators included: the presence and quality of career guidance activities in schools and colleges; students' levels of professional self-awareness; the degree of alignment between the education system and labor market demands; the availability of psychological support and counseling services during the career choice process; and the correlation between the chosen field of study and actual employment. These indicators were analyzed across different countries, not only from a quantitative but also a qualitative perspective, enabling a multidimensional approach to the issue.

The methodological foundations outlined above played a decisive role in the subsequent stages of the research—namely, in identifying the urgent aspects of the career choice problem, analyzing its psychological and social consequences, and formulating recommendations based on international best practices.

Today, the process of career choice is no longer perceived as a purely personal decision; rather, it is increasingly interpreted as a complex, systemic issue closely tied to socio-political and economic factors. In Uzbekistan, this process is still largely shaped by traditional approaches within the educational system. In contrast, the experiences of developed countries demonstrate that career choice is approached in a structured manner, aligned with advanced psychological counseling services and the actual demands of the labor market.

For instance, in the United States, school students begin working with professional psychologists and career guidance specialists from grades 8–9. This process integrates students' personal interests and abilities with labor market needs and social expectations. In Germany, the dual-track system ensures integration between theoretical education and real-world professional engagement through collaboration with representatives from the labor market. This approach supports



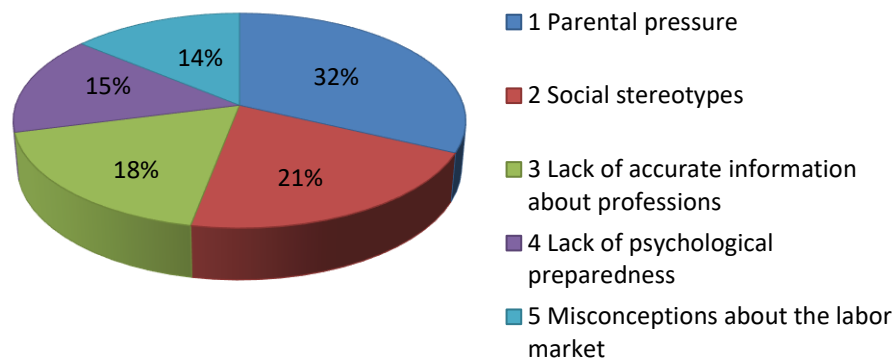
students' active participation, self-awareness, and psychological stability. In Japan, the career selection process is underpinned by a strong emphasis on social responsibility, collective values, and the ideal of being beneficial to others. The process is significantly enriched through mentorship, experience-sharing programs, and strong participation from local production sectors.

In the context of Uzbekistan, however, career choice is often influenced by parental preferences, prevailing social stereotypes, or fashionable career trends. This frequently results in a disconnect between students' intrinsic motivation and actual capabilities. While psychological services for career guidance do exist in schools, their methodological and technical infrastructure remains underdeveloped. The competence of staff is often insufficient, and services are typically limited to theoretical consultations. Consequently, the process of professional identification among students is slow, and many young people feel detached or indifferent toward the specialties they pursue in higher education institutions.

Quantitative data confirms these observations. According to the 2023 report of the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 34.7% of university graduates were unable to secure employment in their field of specialization. This highlights a weak correlation between the education system and labor market needs. Moreover, between 2022 and 2024, over 40% of high school graduates were found to have chosen a specialization not of their own volition, but under parental pressure or due to societal expectations (as determined by internal surveys conducted by psychological centers).

One of the key findings of the study is that in developed countries, decisions related to career choice are primarily grounded in psychological autonomy, personal competencies, and the hierarchy of individual values. In contrast, in Uzbekistan, such decisions are more often influenced by social norms, value-based pressure, and economic necessity. This discrepancy may result in misalignment between personal and professional domains, leading to motivational stagnation, professional burnout, and psychological distress.

Figure 1. Distribution of Psychological Inconsistency Factors in Career Choice in Uzbekistan (Based on Survey Data, n = 200)



A survey conducted among students and recent graduates of higher education institutions in Uzbekistan (n = 200) revealed that the psychological inconsistency observed in the career choice process is complex and multi-causal in nature. According to the chart data, the largest group of participants—32%—attributed their dissatisfaction with their chosen profession or their desire to change careers to parental pressure. This reflects the lack of generational balance in decision-making within Uzbek society and indicates the dominance of a patriarchal model over personal freedom in the career selection process. As a result, external social pressure, rather than internal motivation, plays a decisive role in the professional identity formation of young individuals.

The second most frequently cited factor—social stereotypes (21%)—demonstrates the strong influence of gender roles, perceptions of "prestigious" professions, trendy fields, and status-based views on career choices. These stereotypes lead to a high concentration of male students in fields such as law, IT, and economics, while female students are largely limited to education and healthcare professions. Career decisions made within the boundaries of such stereotypes often lead to lower levels of career satisfaction in practice.

The third most common reason—lack of access to accurate information about professions (18%)—highlights students' limited understanding of their chosen fields in terms of practical experience, labor market conditions, work environment, growth opportunities, and actual demand. This often results in career choices based solely on theoretical or superficial understanding. Consequently, when the chosen



profession confronts real-life conditions, dissonance, dissatisfaction, or the need for a complete career change may arise.

Due to the lack of psychological preparedness (15%), students rarely evaluate the alignment between personal values, self-awareness, life goals, and professional suitability when choosing a career. This situation is closely related to Erikson’s stage of identity crisis, where the individual struggles to achieve psychosocial coherence. A person who lacks self-awareness is less likely to act consistently in their chosen field, show loyalty to their specialization, or achieve professional maturity.

The final identified factor—misperceptions about the labor market (14%)—indicates that the link between educational institutions and the economic sector remains weak. Young people lack access to updated information about occupational forecasts and promising fields. As a result, many students choose professions for which there are few or no employment opportunities in the future, facing significant difficulties when entering the labor market.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that the issue of career choice in Uzbekistan is not only psychological in nature but is also shaped by social and information-communication factors. It highlights the urgent need for a systemic approach, the implementation of modern counseling services, and the integration of labor market-based data into the decision-making process. The survey findings substantiate the necessity of introducing preventive measures and career guidance programs at early stages within the education system.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of the Career Choice Process in the Education Systems of Developed Countries and Uzbekistan

Indicators	USA	Germany	Japan	Uzbekistan
Starting point of career guidance	Grades 8–9	Grades 9–10	Grades 7–8	Grades 10–11 or during academic lyceum
Psychological counseling services	Well-developed and widespread	Institutionalized within state policy	Active mentorship-based approach	Limited, mainly through school psychologists
Integration with labor market	High (internships, apprenticeships)	Through dual education system	Linked with local production sector	Weak, mostly limited to theoretical preparation
Diagnostic methodologies	Holland, MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory	Professional profiling	Based on individual needs and values	Traditional tests, mostly generalized in application
Post-decision professional adaptation	High	High	Moderate to high	Low, often accompanied by career changes and dissatisfaction



An analysis of the sources reveals that in countries such as the United States, Germany, and Japan, career preparation begins as early as grades 7–9, enabling students to develop self-awareness, understand the labor market, and form professional orientation from an early age. In Uzbekistan, however, this process typically starts after grade 10 or during the academic lyceum stage, which often leads to delayed and superficial decision-making.

In the U.S., professional career counseling services are well-established; in Germany, career guidance is formalized at the state policy level; and in Japan, it is embedded within the values of mentorship and collectivism. In Uzbekistan, career counseling is mainly conducted by school psychologists, whose roles are often formal or symbolic. Their methodological knowledge, practical experience, and competence in using modern psychodiagnostic tools remain limited.

In both the U.S. and Germany, there is a strong direct link between the education system and the labor market. In the U.S., students engage in internships that familiarize them with real work environments, while Germany implements a dual system where education and practical work are integrated simultaneously. In Japan, this integration is largely facilitated by the local manufacturing sector. In contrast, Uzbekistan's educational process is predominantly theoretical, with weak connections to the labor market and low adaptability to real working conditions.

Developed countries utilize internationally recognized methods such as Holland's Vocational Choice Theory, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and the Strong Interest Inventory to identify suitable professions for individuals. These methods help balance personal interests, abilities, values, and labor market opportunities. In Uzbekistan, traditional tests and general evaluations are more commonly used, while individualized and scientifically grounded diagnostic approaches remain underdeveloped.

Post-entry career adaptation rates are high in the U.S. and Germany, indicating that career decisions are generally conscious, well-planned, and practically grounded. In Japan, this adaptation is moderately high, driven by cultural values of devotion and social responsibility. In Uzbekistan, however, frequent career changes, retraining, job dissatisfaction, and regret are observed, indicating that many professional decisions are made under pressure or without proper planning.

The comparative table-based analysis confirms that Uzbekistan lags behind developed nations at every stage of the career choice process—starting age,



counseling quality, market alignment, diagnostic precision, and outcome effectiveness. This underscores the urgent need to implement systemic, evidence-based, and individualized approaches to career guidance in the national education system.

Furthermore, in developed countries, career choice is approached comprehensively at all levels of education: early-stage orientation, mid-stage diagnostics and counseling, and advanced-stage professional practice help refine career decisions. In Uzbekistan, however, this process is largely activated only near graduation, leading to hasty decisions made without adequate psychological preparation.

The results of the analysis indicate that career choice has evolved into a complex and multilayered issue within the Uzbek education system. The root of this problem lies not only in psychological and motivational factors, but also in structural, institutional, and socio-psychological deficiencies. In most cases, career-related decisions are not shaped by a systematic framework, but rather by family pressure, cultural norms, and labor market randomness. As a result, young people experience delays in professional identity formation, psychological instability, distrust in work, and a tendency toward frequent career changes.

In developed countries, the mechanisms for managing the career choice process are considerably well-structured. For instance, in the United States and Germany, the stages of diagnosis, monitoring, and correction in career guidance are implemented in a step-by-step manner. Each level of education is equipped with specific systems of counseling, practice, and evaluation. These systems enable young people to make informed decisions based on both their internal potential and the real demands of the labor market.

In Uzbekistan, however, such mechanisms are still in the formative stage. School psychologists often limit their role in career guidance to providing general advice based on students' interests, while diagnostic methods do not fully align with the requirements of contemporary occupational psychology. Moreover, dissatisfaction with the chosen field of study is widely observed among university students, which contributes to growing levels of occupational fatigue, motivational stagnation, and psychological instability. These, in turn, negatively impact students' professional performance.

Theoretically, the career decision-making process is closely associated with Erikson's stage of identity development, which typically occurs between the ages



of 14 and 22. During this stage, the individual strives to understand their social role and define their life goals. If the career choice is made incorrectly or under external pressure, it increases the likelihood of psychological dissonance, identity crisis, and emotional distress. Therefore, career choice should not merely be seen as selecting a field of study or occupation, but as a foundation for psychological stability and personal planning.

In addition, gender factors, economic background, levels of social protection, and trust in the education system must also be acknowledged as determinant variables influencing career decisions. For example, an excessive concentration of female students in fields like medicine, education, and economics, and a similar trend among male students toward technical or legal professions, suggests that stereotypical gender roles still significantly influence career trajectories.

The findings of this study indicate that the career choice issue in Uzbekistan represents a highly relevant and multi-factorial challenge within the national education system. The analysis shows that the problem stems not merely from a lack of information or inadequate guidance but from the insufficient integration of the educational system, psychological services, labor market dynamics, and the family-socio-cultural environment. Unlike the approaches adopted in developed countries, career choice in Uzbekistan remains heavily influenced by external social forces, rather than individual agency. This leads to persistent gaps between personal potential and labor market demands.

Incorrect or forced career decisions are increasingly associated with weak motivation, low self-confidence, occupational instability, and threats to mental well-being among youth. Particularly among students, the insufficient formation of professional identity, feelings of indifference toward their specialization, and the tendency to frequently change career paths all point to deep-rooted psychological origins of the issue.

Given these findings, it is essential to rethink the approach to career guidance within the educational system. First, career counseling services at the school and college levels must be modernized, and psychological counseling and diagnostics should be conducted using contemporary, evidence-based methodologies. An integrative approach that ensures the alignment between a student's interests and capabilities, labor market needs, and broader social context should be embedded at every stage of the educational process.



Systematizing state policy on career guidance, introducing a continuous psychological monitoring and counseling framework from school to higher education, and developing personal development roadmaps for every student will pave the way for informed decision-making. Additionally, strengthening professional internships, dual education systems, and real collaboration between higher education institutions and the industrial sector will help students gain a more accurate understanding of their future careers.

Furthermore, it is necessary to intensify campaigns aimed at challenging societal stereotypes, eliminate discriminatory attitudes in gendered career selection, and foster a culture of decision-making based on personal freedom and individual potential.

In general, reconceptualizing career guidance in the context of psychological stability, social adaptability, and actual labor market needs can significantly enhance the personal and professional success of young individuals. This would also contribute to their social integration and ultimately strengthen their role in the broader context of national development.

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