

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In modern society, one's job or occupation plays a very important part in the individual's life. One increasingly begins to define oneself in terms of one's job.

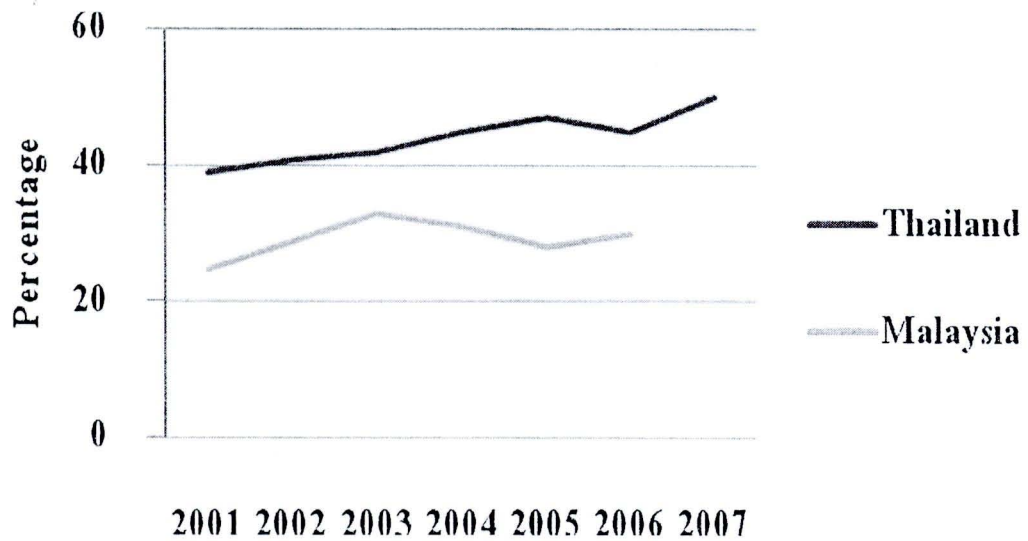
Occupational psychologists have for long a time argued that human productivity partly depends on whether the workers are satisfied with their jobs. Given this, it is surprising that Thailand has not yet developed an appropriate career advisory service.

Over the past few decades, the economy of Thailand has seen continuous growth, which in turn has demanded a more qualified and competent labour force. The Thai Government's Goal for education is to develop education in a manner which is beneficial to the economic growth of the nation and which corresponds to the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP). At the same time it is to be adjusted in harmony with globalization to accomplish educational excellence by the year 2007-2012. This policy saw the enrollment of students grow at an annual rate of 5 percent annually through 2008, increasing from roughly 1.82 million to 2.4 million students. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Thailand showed a gross enrollment rate of 50 percent for 2007, up from 39 percent in 2001. (UNESCO Institute of Education Statistics and World Resources Institute (Thailand), 2009).

How far has this growth helped the economy grow as laid down by the plan? How much have students been advised about their prospective careers and been directed towards more fulfilling professions?

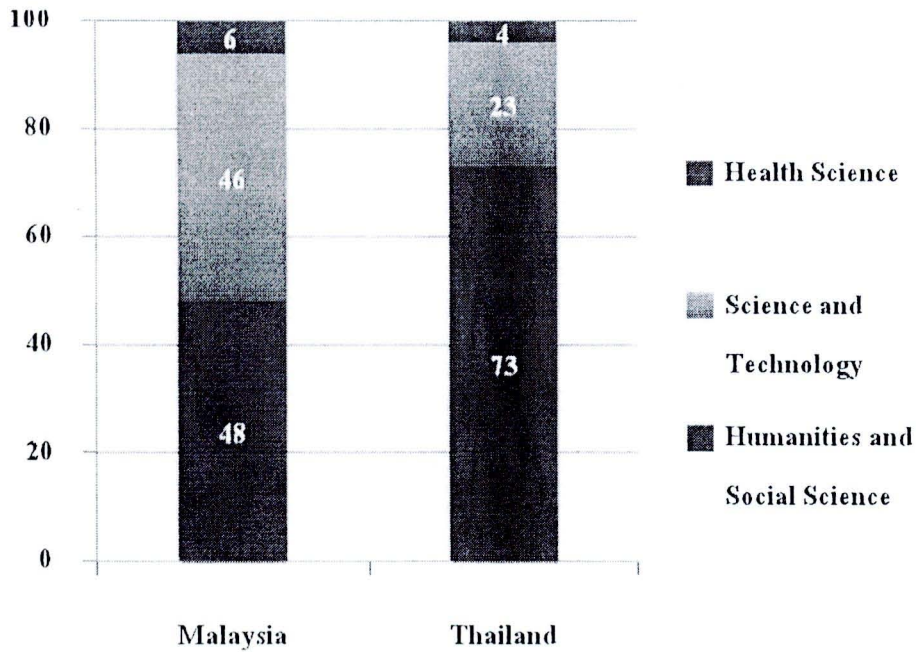
For example, vocational and technical tracks account for merely 15 percent in Thailand. Graduate level enrollment is very small to a number of 1 percent in Thailand (The World Bank, 2010). Interestingly enough, according to firm-level surveys the vocational track is a much larger source for recruitment in Thailand.

Social sciences programs and humanities are much more dominant in Thailand, at 73 percent of all enrollments compared to 23 percent of all enrollments for science and technology programs. Enrollments in programs in health sciences and welfare are small, at 5 percent in Thailand.



**Figure 1** Trend on gross enrollment of Thailand from 2001-2007.

*Note.* From *Higher Education Institutions in Thailand and Malaysia-can they Deliver*, by UNESCO Institute of Education Statistics and World Resources Institute (Thailand), 2009, Retrieved December 5, 2010, from <http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/template2/apeid/workshops/macao08/presentations/3-p-7-3-pp.ppt>

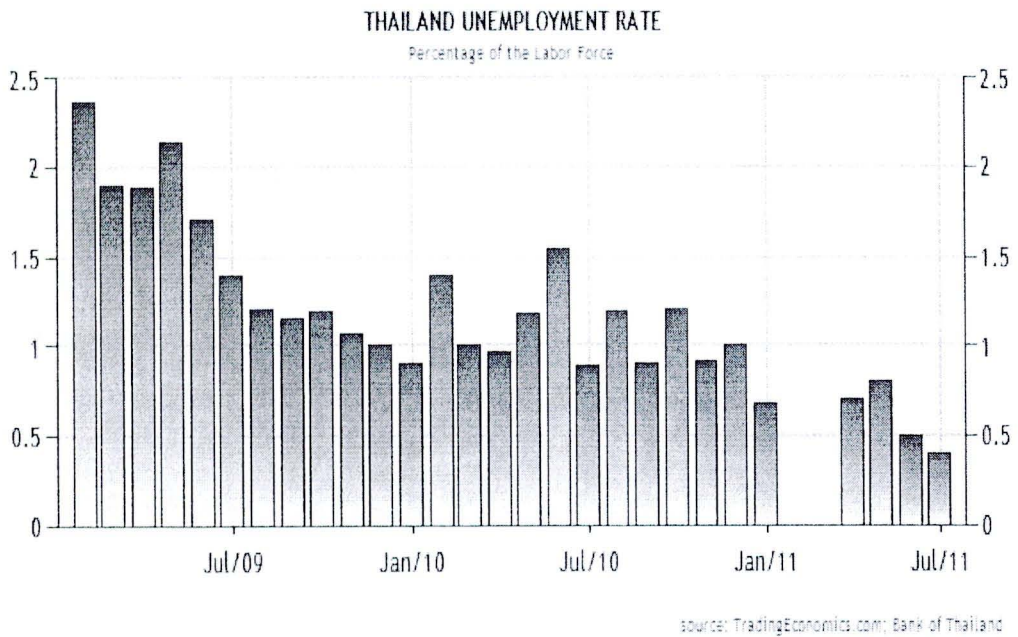


**Figure 2** Tertiary enrollment by program of 2006 between Thailand and Malaysia.

*Note.* From *Higher Education Institutions in Thailand and Malaysia-can they deliver*, by UNESCO Institute of Education Statistics and World Resources Institute (Thailand), 2009, Retrieved December 5, 2010, from <http://www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/template2/apcid/workshops/macao08/presentations/3-p-7-3-pp.ppt>

In Thailand, even though only 0.4% are currently unemployed (see Figure) excluding those who are not looking for jobs, those who are institutionalized, or those who are serving the country in the military (Trading Economics, 2011) the lack of skilled workers is a key bottleneck in increasing firm capacity. In 2006, approximately one third of firms in both countries identified a lack of skilled workers as a major capacity constraint. In Thailand

the lack of skilled workers was a greater constraint for firms domestically owned; 50 percent note this as a major issue. Figure 4, compares the evidence of the skills shortages of managers in Thailand compared to Malaysia.



**Figure 3** Thailand unemployment rate; percentage of labor force.

*Note.* From *UNESCO Institute of Education Statistics and World Resources Institute (Thailand)*, by Trading Economics, 2011, Retrieved June 20, 2011, from <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/thailand/unemployment-rate>



**Figure 4** Thailand unemployment rate; percentage of labor force.

*Note.* Form *Skills Inadequacy and Thailand Competitiveness*, by A. G.

Zeufack, 2006, Retrieved December 5, 2010, from [http://docs.google.com/a/iis.ru.ac.th/viewer?a=v&q=cache:GQJYDAfFyU8J:siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTHAILAND/Resources/333200-1089943634036/475256-1151398840534/oct26\\_Skill\\_shortage\\_Albertppt+Skills+Inadequacy+and+Thailand+Competitiveness&hl=th&gl=th&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgULyrlMCrISAGCwHL9mQPSj32CHR4CXmj8XJoYykJwYFJYuG3uXnVRZm-gf0fNHWjzJN0AtrRFz\\_QQ-HY4-IIQ5ys77\\_C-IB4vFT2vmbRu6qsJEh1f4THh-nMnE2\\_-](http://docs.google.com/a/iis.ru.ac.th/viewer?a=v&q=cache:GQJYDAfFyU8J:siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTHAILAND/Resources/333200-1089943634036/475256-1151398840534/oct26_Skill_shortage_Albertppt+Skills+Inadequacy+and+Thailand+Competitiveness&hl=th&gl=th&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgULyrlMCrISAGCwHL9mQPSj32CHR4CXmj8XJoYykJwYFJYuG3uXnVRZm-gf0fNHWjzJN0AtrRFz_QQ-HY4-IIQ5ys77_C-IB4vFT2vmbRu6qsJEh1f4THh-nMnE2_-)

Since 2003, the percentage of firms that consider a lack of skilled workers as a key capacity constraint increased by 10 percent in Thailand.

Thai firms complain not just of high wage demands but also high turnover rates. In 2006, 24 percent of manufacturing firms and 32 percent of service firms cite high wage demand as the top reason for vacancies up from 7 and 1 percent respectively from 2002. This is interesting since both the relative and the absolute compensation levels for skilled and production works have actually decreased during the same period. In Thailand, the most frequently reason cited for vacancies is high turnover rates—thirty percent of all firms cite this as the top reason for vacancies, down 1 percent from 2004. In Thailand 22 percent of firms cited the applicants' lack of basic skills as a cause of vacancies in 2006—up 10 percent from 2004, and 18 percent cited a lack of technical skills—up 5 percent. (World Bank Enterprise Surveys, 2009) Both employers and employees in Thailand point to skills shortcomings and mismatches as major problems, within the country especially among professional workers.

### **World Bank Enterprise Surveys**

It is apparent from the above that apart from reforming the education system, Thailand needs to do something about helping students to select careers that help them to lead a more fulfilling life for themselves as well as meeting the needs of the economy. It is a contention and a finding of this research that a career advisory service is desperately needed in Thailand.

Careers advisers try to assist people to maximise their potential, and achieve a satisfying life, by helping them to identify and choose suitable career options. It is vital to be aware that an individual's identity development unfolds within the family and education, and individuality may influence career development in both restrained and obvious ways such as choice of career, choice of university, salience of roles and value expectations of the work role. In addition, identity often serves as a mediator between the objective stressors and an individual's vocational choice in response to circumstances (Helms & Piper, 1994).

In Osipow's book *Theories of Career Development*, the author stated, "The process of career choice is so deeply imbedded in cultural, educational and economic factors that it is unreasonable to try to develop a theory of career development without including those variables" (Osipow, 1983, p. 112).

It is for this reason that this dissertation on career choice is located within the social theories of education and in particular functions of education.

The functions of education are many and varied, as we will see. However, one function, as probably perceived by students, is to give them a career that satisfies them. This dissertation will try to marry educational theories with career theory.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify factors affecting the decision process of Thai students regarding their choice of career. The significant influence of others, perception and awareness of the industry, and personal background were explored in the context of career theories. The level of turnover and lack of skills as highlighted by employers and employment reports were also addressed as well as exploration of whether there is sufficient career advice within the education system. Moreover, the degree to which personality, career orientation, and values affect job satisfaction is also studied. This process is examined in the context of the part education plays in the choice of career and the satisfaction derived from it.

## **Statement of Problem**

Work is seen as a central life focus and organizational theorists tell us that work is meant to be satisfying and motivating. How far are the careers selected by the respondents satisfying? How is career choice made? What part does school and university play in the choice of careers and is career advice available in schools and universities? Finally is there a disjunction between career and satisfaction. With this in mind, the study investigated worker job 'fit' or congruence and job satisfaction amongst graduate respondents. The initial hypothesis was that people who graduate in fields congruent with their

inventoried interest report greater job satisfaction after entering related occupations.

The three main research questions were:

1. What, if any, is the 'fit' between career orientation, personality, values, and job satisfaction?
2. Have the respondents received career advice? And how effective has this been?
3. What is the relationship between various demographic variables, career interest, personality, values, and job satisfaction?

In addition:

1. Does this correlation vary among different occupations in Thailand?
2. Does 'fit' or congruence relate to overall satisfaction, or to some specific aspects of job satisfaction?
3. Is there any difference between genders in terms of their occupational interests?
4. Is there any relationship between personality and occupational interest test?

Further to the above, the following sub-research questions will also be investigated.

1. How did the samples of respondents select their careers?
2. What is the link between their education and career choice?
3. How does their education relate to their satisfaction from their career?

The research questions address a key premise in vocational counseling the assumption that interest ‘fit’ or congruence leads to satisfaction. The answers to the questions may have implications for career guidance, worker morale and human resource planning.

Dewey (1997, p. 90), stated that “the road of a new education is not an easier one to follow than the old road but a more strenuous and difficult one”. The past few decades have seen great progress in career research, ranging from the development of conceptual frameworks to innovative empirical studies based on a variety of epistemological viewpoints. Researchers from a great number of disciplines have contributed to the understanding of what happens at various levels when individuals travel through their professional lives (Arthur Hall, & Lawrence, 1989; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007)

The field of career research itself is interdisciplinary by nature. Yet it is riven by substantial intellectual divisions with deep historical roots (Moore, Gunz, & Hall, 2007), perhaps the most notable being that between the study of organizational careers and of vocational psychology (Collin & Patton, 2009). It is served by different career research communities, for example, the ‘management’ career researchers versus the career choice, education and counselling researchers (Arthur, 2008; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). First, the concept of career research has to take into account the contextuality and multilevel quality of careers by addressing different levels of analysis. Careers are multilayered and multi- dimensional (Collin & Patton, 2009), and there is a call for a balancing approach between contextual, organizational, and individual variables by including various levels and units of analysis and their

interaction (Bailey, 2005; Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007). Different disciplines focus on specific levels of analysis, for example, sociology focuses on the macro-context (e.g. global, national, institutional), organization theory on the occupational or organizational context, and psychology on individual level phenomena (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007).

Schein (2007) claims that not only should the content of career research should be diversified but also that the methodology and methods used could be more closely linked to the nature of the problems investigated in career research (Schein, 2007). Methods are closely linked to paradigms with specific views regarding ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical structure, and research methods (McIlveen, 2009).

According to Bourdieu educational social theory conceptualizes individuals as producers of social practices in social space while following specific logics of practices. They are using their-economic, cultural, and social capitals-that are acknowledged as symbolic capital in the respective fields. Three constructs are central to the theory: field, habitus, and capital.

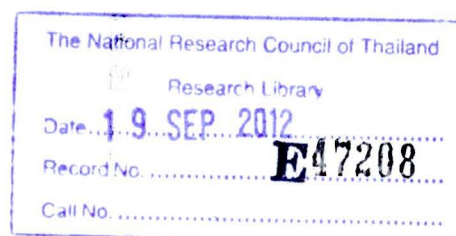
Economic capital in a general, anonymous, all-purpose form can be converted from one generation to the next. It can be more easily and efficiently converted into social, cultural, and symbolic capital than vice versa (Postone, LiPuma, & Calhoun, 1993). Social capital, according to Postone, involves relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance, resources based upon social connections and group or class membership. Cultural or informational capital appears in three forms (Bourdieu, 2005):



1. incorporated, that is, durable embodied dispositions of habitus such as competence, skills;
2. objectivised through cultural products like books, paintings, machines, and so on; and
3. institutionalized through academic titles and degrees, which are relatively independent from the actually incorporated cultural capital.

As a third type of capital, symbolic capital is closely related to the other two fields. The rules of a particular social field specify which combination of the basic forms of capital will be authorized as symbolic capital, thus becoming socially recognized as legitimate. Bourdieu, the renowned education theorist, looks at careers in terms of contributing to human, social, economic and cultural dimensions. He rightly points out that career and career development should be seen as a critical element of education.

Education in every sense a fundamental factor in development. In modern society education prepares individuals for careers. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. In addition it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution.



During the twentieth century, education, skills, and the acquisition of knowledge have become crucial determinants of a person's and a nation's productivity. One can even call the twentieth century the "Age of Human Capital" in the sense that the primary determinant of a country's standard of living is how well it succeeds in developing and utilizing the skills and knowledge, as well as furthering the health and educating the majority of its population.

### **Higher Education's Role**

Higher education has historically included economic development as part of its core mission. The colleges and universities serving Thailand have allocated fiscal, physical, and human resources and created entrepreneurship systems within the institutions to advance economic development. Senior administrators provide strong, visible leadership designed to

1. create a quality workforce by growing, training, and attracting the finest talent
2. support current business and industry
3. improve learning and teaching from pre-school through university
4. take strong and visible roles in regional initiatives
5. disseminate research and promote technology transfer
6. enhance the technology infrastructure
7. promote livable communities

Career choice can be looked at in terms of education theories.

Education has been influenced by social theories; most influential of which are functionalism, Marxism, interpretivism, and post-modernism. The development of careers and career choice theories are dependent on these theories.

However, the search for a social theory which is compatible for the 21st century educational philosophy is not an easy task because there are so many social theories that have influenced education.

There is broad consensus that expansion in the skills, knowledge, and capacities of individuals what is now called increasing human capital is a key element in economic progress and raising living standards. Formal education systems play an important role in the expansion of human capital and governments and international bodies have often made explicit targets for the expansion of education. However, there is a big difference between sitting in a classroom and an increase in human capital. The quality of education is a central concern for many countries.

Education philosophy lays down fairly lofty aims for education but it is probably the argument that education leads to economic development that motivates most governments to invest in education. Productive economy depends on productive individuals, happy in their careers. This is what this dissertation attempts to explore.

To locate the theory of career within the education theory we need to look at various functions of education.

## **The Functionalist Theory**

The functionalist theory focuses on the ways that universal education serves the needs of society. Functionalists first see education in its manifest role: conveying basic knowledge and skills to the next generation. Durkheim (the founder of functionalist theory) identified the latent role of education as one of socializing people into society's mainstream. This "moral education," as he called it, helped form a more-cohesive social structure by bringing together people from diverse backgrounds.

Functionalists point to other latent roles of education such as transmission of core values and social control. The core values in Thai education reflect those characteristics that support the political and economic systems that originally fuelled education.

A carefully constructed curriculum helps students develop their identities and Self-esteem. Another benefit that functionalists see in education is sorting separating students on the basis of merit. Society's needs demand that the most capable people get channelled into the most important occupations.

## **The Conflict theory**

Conflict theory sees the purpose of education as maintaining social inequality and preserving the power of those who dominate society. Conflict theorists examine the same functions of education as functionalists.

Functionalists see education as a beneficial contribution to an ordered society; however, conflict theorists see the educational system as perpetuating the status quo by dulling the lower classes into being obedient workers.

### **The Symbolic Interactionist Theory**

Symbolic interactionists limit their analysis of education to what they directly observe happening in the classroom. They focus on how teacher expectations influence student performance, perceptions, and attitudes.

### **Structural Theory**

Both Marxism and Functionalism agree that education socialises students into the prevailing norms and values of a society. But, whether this is a ‘good’ thing or not depends on whether it is believed that the present state of a society (the status quo) is worth preserving or in need of change.

Functionalism investigates institutions to consider the functions they perform in society. The functionalist premise is that if an institution exists, then there must be some reason for its existence. As regards education, functionalists assume that educational institutions serve some societal need. Educational institutions are examined for the positive contribution they make towards maintaining society.

Education is seen as vital as regards socialization. All societies have to have ways of socialising new members, and some societies need specialist

institutions for differentiating between people and allocating them to specific levels of economic activity within their society such is the case with industrial societies.

So here are two central functions performed by educational institutions:

1. General socialisation of the whole population into the dominant culture, values and beliefs of a society.
2. Selecting people for different types and levels of education.

In brief, education meets the needs of the system by:

1. Making sure that all children have a basic commitment to their society's values and beliefs.
2. Preparing individuals for their specific location within the social hierarchy.

### **Marxism: The conflict approach**

Critical social theorists have produced many generative critiques of educational processes, such as parental involvement (Lareau, 2000) and curriculum formation (Apple, 1990), as well as less formal aspects of schooling, like popular culture (Giroux, 1994). Critical social theorists have also broadened the influences impacting education, including insights on new constructions of identity within the postcolonial context (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2004).

## **A Language of Critique in Quality Education**

In the world of work the students must have access to ideas that pose critical questions about the new world order, a process assisted by theory informed perspectives on students' social experiences.

Quality teaching in this sense means the ability to apprehend the dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective nature of work and career. Critical social theorists have made it known that quality education is as much about teaching students the ability to read the world more critically (ideology critique) as it is imagining a better world.

The past few decades have seen great progress in career research, ranging from the development of conceptual frameworks to innovative empirical studies based on a variety of epistemological viewpoints. Researchers from a great number of disciplines have contributed to the understanding of what happens at various levels when individuals travel through their professional lives (Arthur et al., 1989; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007). The field of career research itself is interdisciplinary by nature. Yet there are intellectual divisions within them (Moore et al., 2007), perhaps the most notable being that between the study of organizational careers and of vocational psychology (Collin & Patton, 2009). It is served by different career research communities, for example, the 'management' career researchers versus the career choice, education and counselling researchers (Arthur, 2008; Gunz & Peiperl, 2007).

At a micro level, numerous studies indicate that increases in earnings are associated with additional years of education, with the rate of return varying with high level of education (Psacharopoulos, 1994). The returns to primary schooling tend to be greater than those to secondary and tertiary education (Psacharopoulos, 1994, pp. 1325-1330).

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It has been suggested that career choice has to be looked at in terms of education theories. Education has been influenced by social theories.

A common tool used in giving careers advice is interest testing, where the client's vocational interests are measured, and a range of career options considered to match their interests is generated. Prominent career theorists, such as Dawis and Lofquist (1984) and Holland (1985) have stated that people whose vocational interests have 'fit' or congruence or "fit" with their work environments, will be more satisfied with their jobs

Many researchers have wondered how people's work performance can be improved, and have investigated aspects of respondents' personal and working lives which appear to affect their attainment. In many cases, employees' interests (and how similar these are to their work tasks) have been shown to be linked with their aptitude for and performance in a job, and the enjoyment or satisfaction they gain from their work. Vocational choice theories suggest that if people choose types of work which match their interests or other needs, they will be both satisfied and successful in their jobs. Prominent vocational choice theorists include Dawis and Lofquist (1984), Gottfredson (1981) and Holland (1985).