

# Educational Decisions and the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate in Post-Compulsory Education

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## Abstract

In spite of educational expansion in the tertiary sector of the Swiss education system, the Vocational Professional Education and Training (VPET) is still very attractive for a lot of the juveniles who are finishing their compulsory education. While the basic vocational training focuses on learning professional skills and qualifications, the Swiss education systems offers a possibility to integrate also aspects of general education when choosing VET.

The implementation of the Federal Vocational Baccalaureate (FVB) in 1994 has been one of the central innovations of the last decades. As time went on, the fraction of students in post-compulsory education with FVB has remarkably increased.

The main focus of this thesis is twofold. On the one hand, the mechanisms in the process of educational and occupational decisions at the end of compulsory education will be examined. On the other hand, the conversion of aspirations into the individuals' decision when choosing VPET and FVB will be analyzed.

Of particular interest is to explain why students in Switzerland choose the FVB whilst taking into account the individuals' background, their (future) career aspirations as well as structural restrictions of the Swiss educational system.

## Theoretical Approach

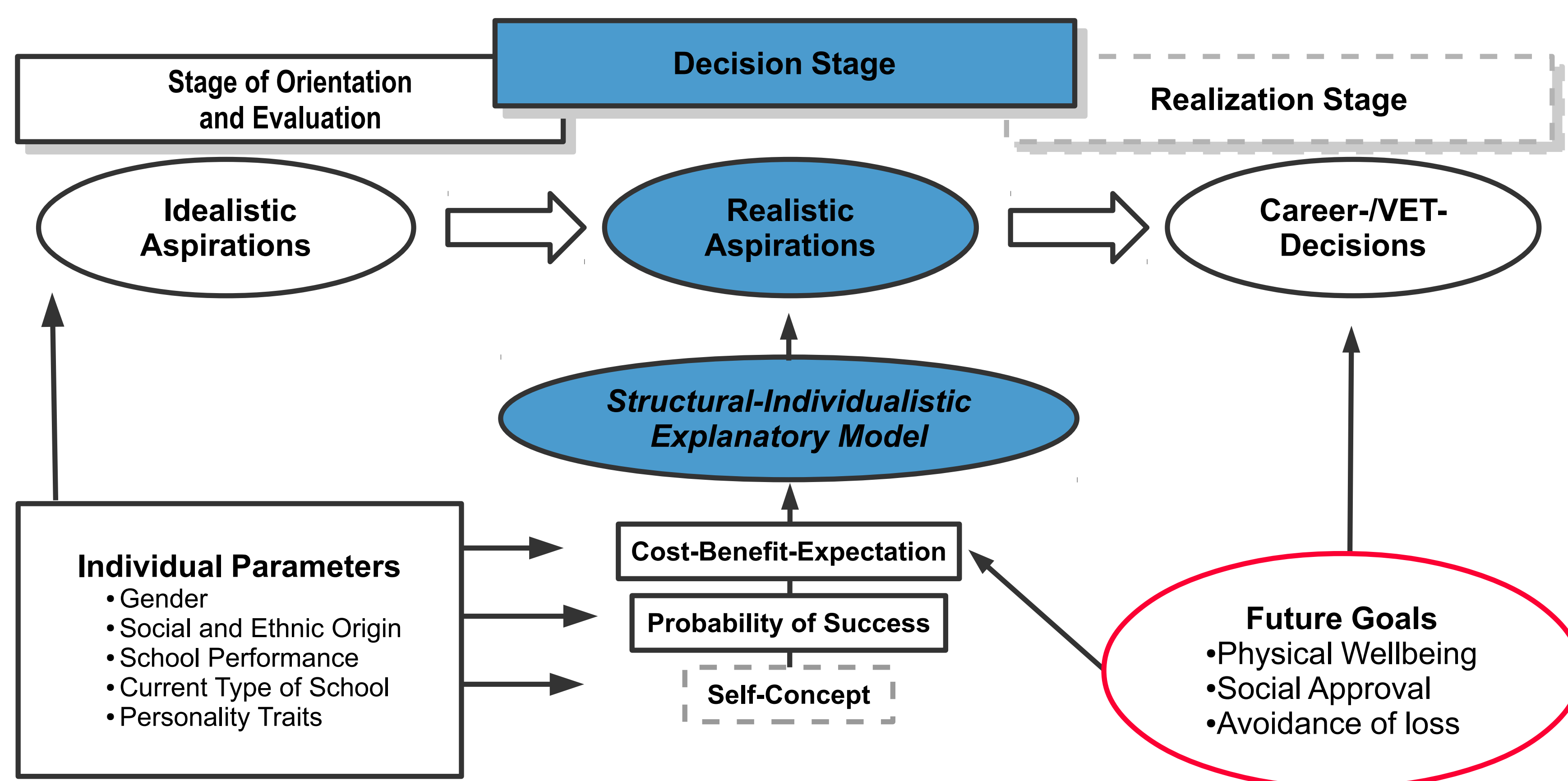
### Theoretical Background

Educational decisions can be explained by means of the assumptions of the **rational choice theory (RC)**. Therefore socially selective educational decisions are the result of the trade-off between educational alternatives considering individuals' preferences as well as structural restrictions of the educational system.

Following Lindenberg's **social production function (SBF)** all humans aspire to maximize social approval (prestige) and physical wellbeing (income) whilst trying to avoid loss (status maintenance). An educational certificate, here FVB, can be rated as **second-order mean of production** which allows an individual to acquire the main goals by learning their favorite profession and successfully entering the labour market.

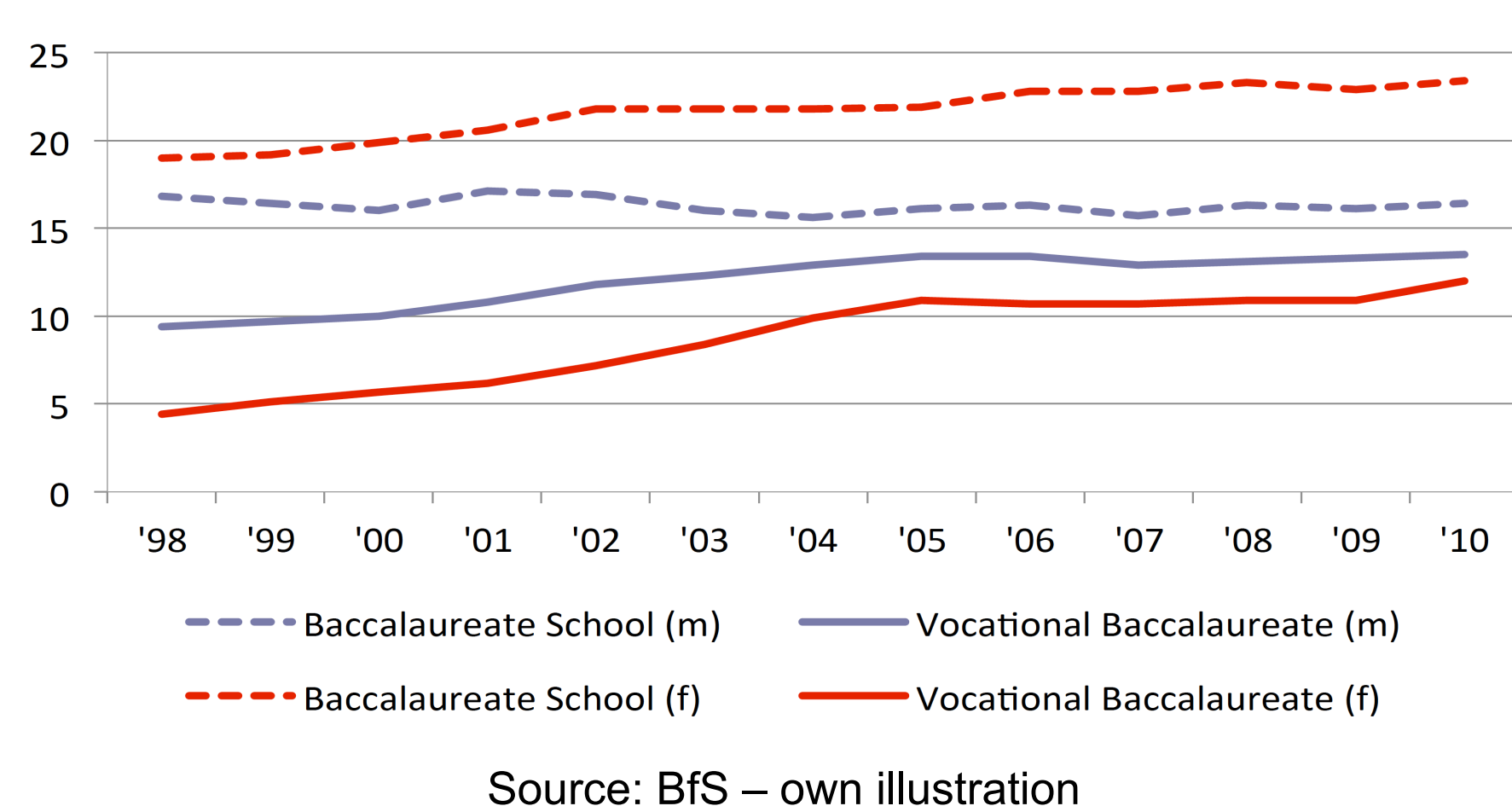
Seen from the viewpoint of a structural-individualistic action model we assume that the opportunities for VPET and in particular FVB depend on...

- (1) ... socially selective career aspirations and decision
- (2) ... the previous educational career
- (3) ... the selection process of the educational system and possible alternatives



## Research Questions

### Percentage of baccalaureate school and voc. Baccalaureate on secondary education (by Gender)



Source: BFS – own illustration

### Leading Questions

- (1) Which role plays the option **Federal Vocational Baccalaureate** in the set of alternatives of individuals at the end of compulsory school?
- (2) What are the main determinants which influence an individual's educational aspirations, and therefore the process of career decisions?
- (3) **To what extent impact future career plans the educational aspiration following the assumptions of the social productions theory?**
- (4) How do first-order and second-order means of production influence the educational decisions when evaluating the alternatives of post-compulsory education?

Tab.1: Aspiration of FVB in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (logistic regression)

School Type 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade <sup>a</sup>	
basic requirements	-0.743*** (0.131)
baccalaureate school	0.856*** (0.221)
no selection	-0.121 (0.278)
Grades in German	0.258+ (0.132)
Grades in Math	-0.156 (0.112)
Language: (Swiss-)German	-0.430+ (0.226)
Highest Parental Education <sup>b</sup>	
ISCED 3b	0.170 (0.152)
ISCED 3a	0.262 (0.225)
ISCED 4-6	0.804*** (0.213)
ISCED missing	-0.326 (0.208)
FVB as second-order mean of production <sup>c</sup>	
FVB not helpful	-0.873*** (0.205)
FVB helpful	0.998*** (0.141)
N	1354
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.162

Source: DAB-Panel  
Marginal effects; Standard errors in parentheses  
Reference: <sup>a</sup>extended requirements, <sup>b</sup>ISCED 3c, <sup>c</sup>partly helpful  
+ p < 0.10, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

## Data and Variables

### DAB-Panel Study

All of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the German-speaking part of Switzerland are the target population of the DAB panel study. The random sampling is based on data for education and science provided by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).

The data of the three-wave panel is gathered by an online survey which has been completed during a lesson in the classroom. The parents could choose between PAPI or online questionnaire.

In total, the DAB Panel provides considerable data for nearly 3'500 pupils. This data includes their educational aspirations and decisions, socio-economic background, family situation and support, school performance and school type, as well as important theoretical parameters.

### Variables

•AV: Educational Aspiration: FVB when choosing VET (yes = now or later, no = not now or later and undecided)

### Conclusion

- Most important is the perception of FVB as a second-order mean for future career.
- Pupils from a lower school type in 8<sup>th</sup> grade are less likely to choose the opportunity of FVB.
- Better grades in German increase the chance of choosing FVB.
- A higher parental education increases the probability of choosing FVB.

### Outlook

- Examination of the subjective perception of FVB's costs and benefits
- Taking personality traits into account
- Analyses of the determinants of a changing aspirations between 8<sup>th</sup> grade and finishing compulsory school
- Multilevel analyses to include the whole set of alternatives (VET – FVB – Baccalaureate School)

### References

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