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EDUCATION AS COMMONS

SELECTED PAPERS FROM
AIS EDUCATION
INTERNATIONAL
MID-TERM CONFERENCE

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Edited by

Orazio Giancola

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Organizers and partners



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PROPENSITIES AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICES: THE DYNAMICS OF (RE)PRODUCTION OF INEQUALITIES

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Abstract Aim of this paper is to analyse the impact of social inequalities on future expectations of upper secondary school students in Lazio (N=2.860) through a specifically designed survey. The aim is to answer three broad questions: first, estimate the impact of social origin on school choice at the first level (in terms of macro tracks). Second, we observe the differential impact that educational tracks exert on an individual’s educational experience in terms of overall performance and repetition. Lastly, analyse the influence of these variables (track, educational background, and social origin) on individual life prospect, specifically in terms of distribution and post-school choices between university and labour market. The results clearly show a chaining effect among the variables involved: social origin has a direct impact on the educational track -both the macro track chosen and the school experience- spilling over indirectly and through a cumulative effect on students’ future life choices.

INTRODUCTION: BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICES

Educational choices play a crucial role in shaping individuals’ lives and their impact on society. Firstly, these choices directly influence career opportunities (Johnson & Mortimer, 2002). Moreover, educational choices contribute significantly to personal development. Education goes beyond merely acquiring knowledge; it shapes individuals’ perspectives, values, and abilities (Deci et al., 1991). The subjects studied, the challenges faced, and the experiences gained all contribute to personal growth. For example, engaging with diverse viewpoints in philosophy courses can broaden one’s understanding of the world and cultivate critical thinking skills. Economic stability is another crucial aspect influenced by educational decisions. Studies consistently show a positive correlation between higher levels of education and earning potential (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). Individuals with advanced educational degrees or specialized skills often earned higher salaries and enjoy greater financial security.

Thus, making informed educational choices can significantly impact one's long-term economic prospects. Furthermore, education serves as a catalyst for social mobility. By pursuing higher education, individuals can transcend socio-economic barriers and access opportunities for advancement. This aspect is particularly significant in promoting equality and reducing disparities in society. Education empowers individuals to break cycles of poverty and achieve upward mobility, thereby fostering a more equitable society. Additionally, educational choices are pivotal in fostering a culture of lifelong learning. Education goes beyond achieving a degree; it involves an ongoing journey of acquiring new knowledge and skills. Choosing educational paths that promote intellectual curiosity and adaptability prepares individuals for continuous learning throughout their lives. This is especially relevant in today's rapidly changing world, where new technologies and industries emerge regularly. Moreover, educational choices influence individuals' contributions to society (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In this sense, by pursuing fields aligned with their interests and values, individuals can make meaningful contributions to their communities. Whether through scientific research, artistic expression, or social advocacy, education equips individuals with the tools to address societal challenges and effect positive change.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The Italian literature on educational choices has shown over time the existence of a clear chaining effect between social background, educational pathway, and post-school expectations (Azzollini & Vergolini, 2014; Barone et al., 2018; Giancola & Salmieri, 2022). Individuals from higher socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds choose general (vs technical/vocational) pathways in high school, which significantly increases the likelihood of pursuing higher education at the university level. High school pathways, more so than technical and vocational track, emphasise a generalist approach to teaching, encouraging students to pursue university degrees rather than entering the job market directly. The chosen secondary education address plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' social background, resulting in a cumulative effect that carries over into their future paths. In this way, the macro track becomes the driver of the process of (re)production of social and educational inequality (Giancola & Colarusso, 2020). Besides the selected track, the sphere of individual experience influences the shaping of expectations and aspirations. That process then

leads students to choose between education, university, and the labour market after school. In this way, future expectations are influenced by previous choices, which are affected by social origin and individual experiences. The family environment in which individuals are raised transmits a social, cultural, and economic inheritance that influences individual actions by imposing constraints on their choices. Conversely, choices may arise from a decision-making process involving cost-benefit analysis, wherein individuals assess the most advantageous alternatives in relation to their specific context. This dynamic recalls the theoretical approaches related to the theory of cultural and social reproduction of inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970) and the cost/benefit evaluation of the rational choice approach (Boudon, 1974; Mare, 1980; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). Therefore, it is essential to focus on the underlying factors in the decision-making process that lead students to make a choice at the end of the educational pathway. Our study shows the social dynamics underlying educational choices at the end of upper secondary education and reveals the chaining effects among the variables considered. The aim is to identify the specific factors that affect these prospects, including individual and contextual variables, to determine the influences that prompt students to pursue further studies or immediately access to labour market. Our hypothesis states that the social background of individuals has a direct and significant effect on the educational pathway, and this effect also directly impacts their postgraduate choices (Fig.1). These relations suggest that the choice of secondary school significantly reduces the impact of social background, serving as a crucial factor in (re)producing social and educational inequalities: it acts as a mediator between socio-economic and cultural factors and future opportunities (Giancola & Colarusso, 2020).

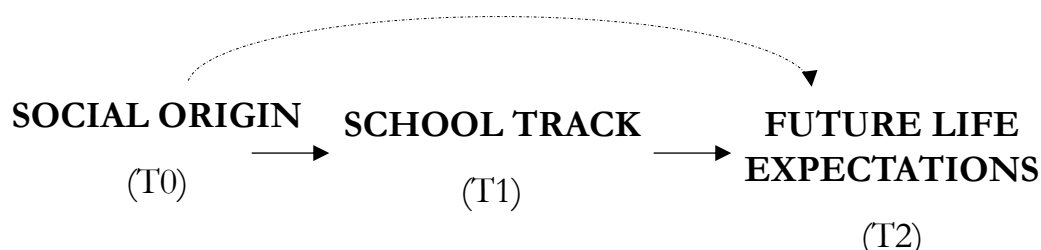


Figure 1. Chain effect model. Authors elaboration.

DATA AND METHODS

We used original survey data collected between March and May 2023 in the Lazio region (N=2860). Data were collected using a stratified typological sampling method in which we stratified the population based on gender, type of school attended, and geographical area (specifically, the provinces of Lazio). From each layer, we extracted a random sample. Last, we combined the samples from individual strata to get the final sample. The questionnaire, designed through an informatics technology infrastructure¹, can be on the one hand a useful tool for students to reflect on future choices and as a useful way of orientation in relation to various post-school choices. It comprises a shared area for all respondents and a central section related to post-graduation choices, filtered based on respondents' answers. The common areas investigate the demographic information of the interviewee (covering aspects like age, gender, place of birth, residence, etc.) and propose some probing questions aimed at identifying perceptions regarding the school experience and aspirations/expectations for the future. Future expectations are captured through a filtering question in which respondents choose between continuing studies at the university level, seeking a job, both choices, and attending a vocational training course. The section related to university choices explore, through the "mapping" technique (Giancola et al., 2023), the fields of study that the interviewee declares as a primary choice, considered, or directly excluded. We used two methods for the questionnaire administration. The first technique of filling out the questionnaire was direct, face-to-face, through the CAPI method. With the presence of a researcher, the compilation took place in a mutually agreed space, and they explained the purpose and instructions for filling out the questionnaire. The second technique entailed the direct distribution of the survey link to schools, granting students the autonomy to self-administer it. We used the SPSS data analysis program to process the data. The analysis involved three steps:

In a first step, we observe the impact of social origin on the type of chosen school track, in terms of pathways (macro track), net of individual variables such as gender, and migratory background. The aim is to understand the relations between the variables and construct a multinomial logistic regression model that can accurately predict the factors influencing the choice of secondary study direction.

¹ The reference infrastructure is based on the open-source solution Limesurvey.

Second, we examine the trend of overall educational achievements, in terms of self-assessment, in relation to social origin and the individual variables previously considered. The goal is to estimate the impact that low or high school achievements exerts on the educational path. Next, we run the same analysis for the school repetitions to observe any variations because of non-linear paths.

Last, by employing multinomial logistic regression, we estimate the factors that contribute to individual future choices and their distribution, while verify for individual (social origin, age, gender, migratory background) and pathway-related variables (macro track, repetitions, and educational achievements).

The variable related to the social origin of the interviewees was constructed based on the parents' educational attainment and occupation. On one hand, we develop a typological index with three categories ("low" 35.4%, "medium" 33.5%, "high" 31.1%), primarily used for descriptive analyses. Through Multiple Correspondence Analysis, we generated a metric variable that synthesizes education and parental occupation, used in estimation models. Using parental educational level and occupation reflects the family's capital of resources (financial, social, and cultural) that students consider in their educational and life paths, recalling Bourdieu's theoretical framework (1970). The social origin variable allows us to identify the interviewee's position in social stratification, differentiated based on access to or control of wealth, prestige, and power (Willms and Tramonte, 2015; Giancola & Salmieri, 2022). To investigate the impact of individual and ascriptive variables on academic pathways and observe how these influence post-school life choices, we asked respondents to identify the type of secondary school chosen among general, technical, and vocational track schools. The choice falls to 56.5% for general paths, while 29.3% enrol in technical institutes, and the residual part, 14.2%, opts for vocational schools. This distribution reflects the differentiation and trends of educational pathways in Italy. We examine post-school choices through a question asking respondents to place their expectations for the future among the following options: continuing studies at the university level (46.6%), choosing a vocational training course (5.7%), seeking employment (26%), and continuing studies while working simultaneously (21.7%). To balance the categories, we combined the "work and vocational training" option into a single category (31.7%) for multilevel analyses. Besides the analysis, we considered additional control variables, such as gender, originally split into 49.9% males and 50.1% females. The gender variable was dummy coded for multivariate analysis models, where 1 represents females and 0 males. The migratory background, divided into "native"

(97%), “born in a non-EU country” (1.7%), and “born in an EU country” (1.3%), was made dichotomous for technical and response imbalance reasons by combining non-natives into a single category (3%). Last, we investigated the individual school experience of the student by asking respondents to self-assess their educational achievements on the one hand and to show if they have experienced any failures on the other. The “school achievements” variable, originally divided into “Italian”, “Mathematics”, and “Overall”, asked respondents to place themselves on a scale from 1 (insufficient) to 10 (excellent). We merged these three components into a single dimension using an additive index and divided into five categories: “low” (18.8%); “low-medium” (22.2%); “medium” (28.7%); “medium-high” (18.2%); “high” (12%). The “repetitions” variable, divided into “No, never” (86.4%); “Yes, once” (11.4%); “Yes, more than once” (2.2%), was made dichotomous by contrasting regular students with those who have experienced one or more repetitions (13.6%).

RESULTS

Based on the preliminary results (Tab.1), there are clear associations between the chosen track of secondary education, social background, and gender. The results related to migratory background are less clear, with only slight differences compared to the educational paths of students. In terms of school enrolment, there is a higher percentage of women (67%) in general paths compared to men (45%). Conversely, men focus more on technical paths, with 38% compared to 20% for women. The secondary school track chosen is significantly influenced by social background. Respondents with high levels of social origin enrol in general programs (75%), whereas only 41% of those with low social origin choose the general path. The distribution of this respondent category is split between technical institutes and, to a lesser extent, vocational ones. Only a small percentage (6%) of those from higher social backgrounds choose to pursue vocational careers. This finding supports previous literature showing that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to choose these kinds of courses over general ones. While social background has a significant impact on school type selection, migratory background has a lesser influence, particularly when comparing natives and non-natives, especially in terms of general and technical institutes. The described relation is further supported by the low contingency coefficient.

		Gender		Total	Social Origin			Total	Migratory Back-ground		Total
		Male	Female		Low	Middle	High		Not native	Native	
School Track	General	45.4%	67.3%	56.4%	41.0%	56.3%	74.5%	56.5%	49.2%	58.0%	56.8%
	Technical	38.6%	20.2%	29.4%	39.9%	27.5%	19.1%	29.3%	38.7%	27.7%	29.2%
	Vocational	15.9%	12.5%	14.2%	19.2%	16.2%	6.4%	14.2%	12.0%	14.3%	14.0%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 1. Cross table Track *Gender: Valid cases: 1600; Contingency coeff.: 0.251; Chi square: 107.701; df 4; sign.000. Cross table Track*Social Origin; Valid cases: 1616; Contingency coeff.: 0.313; Chi square 173.213; df 8; sign.000. Cross table Track* Migratory Background. Valid cases: 1585; Contingency coeff.:0.132; Chi square 28.189; df 4; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

School Track		B	Std. Error	Sign.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
General	Intercept	0.826	0.194	0.000			
	Social Origin	0.743	0.061	0.000	2.102	1.864	2.372
	Female	0.692	0.118	0.000	1.997	1.584	2.519
	Migratory Background	0.282	0.158	0.073	1.326	0.974	1.805
Technical	Intercept	0.373	0.196	0.058			
	Social Origin	0.128	0.064	0.044	1.137	1.004	1.288
	Female	-0.431	0.127	0.001	0.650	0.507	0.833
	Migratory Background	0.507	0.158	0.001	1.660	1.218	2.264

a. The reference category is: Vocational. b. The variable social origin is metric

Table 2. Determinants of School Track. Multinomial Logistic Regression model; [Number of valid cases 2767; Overall percentage predicted correctly: 60.7; Log likelihood 3582.678; Cox and Snell.142; Nagelkerke.167; Chi square: 425.164; df: 6; sign.:000]. Source: authors' elaboration.

The estimates shown in Table 2 support the previous description. The influence of social background on the choice of secondary education track persists, albeit with distinct effects on the social composition of various educational tracks. Students from high social backgrounds are twice as likely to choose general paths, while migration background has the greatest impact on technical institutes choice. This result underscores various factors that affect educational choices, which were not identified through the described bivariate analyses. Regarding gender, women are more likely to pursue general paths instead of technical or vocational, which are mostly dominated by males (with a slightly smaller gap in vocational paths).

The cross-tables on overall performance reveal that women consistently report higher results than men, as confirmed by the Oecd (2018). Specifically, 16% of women report better performance, while only 8% of male participants make the same claim. Likewise, the rate of low performance is much higher among men (26%) than women (11%). The differences in performance increase in relation to social origin, which once again proves to be the most impactful factor among the variables considered. As individuals move from lower social backgrounds to higher categories of social origin, there is a significant increase in reported performance, highlighting a strong association between these two dimensions.

		<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Social Origin</i>			<i>Total</i>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>		<i>Low</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>High</i>	
<i>Overall achievement</i>	<i>Low</i>	25.8%	11.8%	18.8%	20.7%	18.9%	16.4%	18.8%
	<i>Middle low</i>	22.5%	22.1%	22.3%	23.6%	23.8%	19.0%	22.2%
	<i>Middle</i>	28.7%	28.8%	28.8%	32.2%	28.3%	25.4%	28.8%
	<i>Middle high</i>	14.8%	21.4%	18.1%	15.3%	17.1%	22.7%	18.2%
	<i>High</i>	8.2%	15.9%	12.1%	8.2%	11.9%	16.5%	12.0%
<i>Total</i>		100,0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 3. Cross table Overall achievement* Gender: Valid cases: 2837; Contingency coeff.: 0.207; Chi square: 126.410; df 4; sign.000. Cross table Overall achievement *Social Origin; Valid cases: 2861; Contingency coeff.: 0.145; Chi square 61.041; df 8; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

Individuals born in Italy show higher performance percentages compared to those who are not native, with only slight variations. At lower levels of performance, the disparities between non-native speakers and Italian respondents become more pronounced, with the former reporting higher percentages. The impact of students' chosen educational track on their reported performance is confirmed. General path

respondents showed moderately high performance, while their counterparts in technical or vocational paths reported lower performance. As performance reaches higher levels, the distinction between technical and vocational paths becomes less significant, giving general students an advantage.

		<i>Migratory Background</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>School Track</i>			<i>Total</i>
		<i>Non-Native</i>	<i>Native</i>		<i>General</i>	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Vocational</i>	
<i>Overall achievement</i>	<i>Low</i>	25.1%	17.9%	18.9%	12.8%	25.8%	28.1%	18.8%
	<i>Middle low</i>	17.0%	22.7%	21.9%	20.0%	23.1%	29.6%	22.2%
	<i>Middle</i>	29.8%	28.8%	28.9%	29.4%	28.0%	27.6%	28.7%
	<i>Middle high</i>	17.8%	18.1%	18.0%	21.7%	16.5%	7.9%	18.2%
	<i>High</i>	10.2%	12.6%	12.3%	16.1%	6.7%	6.9%	12.0%
<i>Total</i>		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4. Cross table Overall achievement* Migratory Background: Valid cases: 2790; Contingency coeff.: 0.075; Chi square: 15.793; df 4; sign.003. Cross table Overall achievement *School track; Valid cases: 2860; Contingency coeff. 0.239; Chi square 172.650; df 8; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Social Origin</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>		<i>Low</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>High</i>	
<i>One and more repetition</i>	18.1%	9.1%	13.6%	20.3%	11.4%	8.2%	13.6%
<i>Regular</i>	81.9%	90.9%	86.4%	79.7%	88.6%	91.8%	86.4%
<i>Total</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5. Cross table: Grade Repetition* Gender: Valid cases: 2837; Contingency coeff.: 0.130; Chi square: 48.783; df 1; sign.000. Cross table: Grade Repetition *Social Origin; Valid cases: 2861; Contingency coeff.: 0.149; Chi square 65.358; df 2; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

Including repetitions, as highlighted in Table 5, allows us to identify factual variables that shape the individual pathways of students. Men have fewer regular paths compared to women, with 18% of them reported experiencing academic failures, while only 9% of women reported the same. Social background still exerts a strong influence on the educational path. The likelihood of experiencing nonlinear school pathways is significantly lower among individuals from higher social classes, with only

8.2% reporting such experiences, compared to 20% of respondents from lower social classes who have faced one or more failures.

Table 6 reveals that migratory background has a more significant influence on repetitions rather than on the self-reported performance of the interviewees. When compared to their international counterparts, Italians displayed more regular career paths. The higher percentage of those who have experienced one or more failures in their educational career falls within the category of non-natives (22.5% vs. 11.7%). Last, attending a vocational or technical institute implies fewer regular paths compared to those who have followed a general path. According to Miur's² report in 2022, the percentage of repeating students in Italy confirms the trend, with vocational (10.3%) and technical (8.9%) institutes having the highest share of non-promoted students. Among general students, 91% choose linear paths, instead of technical or vocational institute respondents, where the percentages are approximately 82% and 76% respectively.

	<i>Migratory Background</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>School Track</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>non native</i>	<i>native</i>		<i>General</i>	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Vocational</i>	
<i>Grade repetition (one and more)</i>	22.5%	11.7%	13.2%	9.0%	17.7%	23.6%	13.6%
<i>Regular</i>	77.5%	88.3%	86.8%	91.0%	82.3%	76.4%	86.4%
<i>Total</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6. Cross table: Grade Repetition* Migratory Background: Valid cases: 2791; Contingency coeff.: 0.109; Chi square: 33.641; df 1; sign.000. Cross table: Grade Repetition *School track; Valid cases: 2862; Contingency coeff.: 0.161; Chi square 75.884; df 2; sign.000. Source: authors elaboration.

Regarding future expectations, women are more likely than men to express a preference for pursuing university studies, while men are more willing to access the labour market and continue their studies at the same time. According to the table 7, the percentage of women directly entering the labour market is only 15%, compared to 37.5% for men. The role of social background as a discriminating factor is clear, as students from higher social origin choose university education over immediate

² MIUR is the acronym related to the Ministry of Education and Merit present in Italy (<https://www.miur.gov.it/>)

employment or professional training. Despite the link between social background and post school choices, a significant share of respondents from disadvantaged backgrounds choose to pursue tertiary education, highlighting their strong motivation and social payback.

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Social Origin</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>		<i>Low</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>High</i>	
<i>Looking for a job</i>	37.5%	15.0%	26.2%	35.6%	27.3%	13.7%	26.0%
<i>Professional training</i>	6.0%	5.5%	5.7%	7.1%	5.1%	4.7%	5.7%
<i>Looking for a job and continuing education (at the tertiary level)</i>	18.0%	24.6%	21.3%	21.9%	22.3%	20.7%	21.7%
<i>Continuing education (at the tertiary level)</i>	38.5%	54.9%	46.7%	35.3%	45.4%	60.9%	46.6%
<i>Total</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7. Cross table: Future life expectations* Gender: Valid cases: 2836; Contingency coeff.: 0.252; Chi square: 192.489; df 3; sign.000. Cross table: Future life expectations *Social Origin; Valid cases: 2859; Contingency coeff.: 0.231; Chi square 160.890; df 6; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

The clearest disparities related to migratory background can be seen in the preference for further studies, particularly among native students. Tertiary education is chosen by 48% of Italians, while only 36% of non-natives opt for the same pathway. The chosen educational track proves to be a strong predictor of post-school choice. Among those pursuing tertiary education, 60% come from general backgrounds, with only 14% coming from vocational institutes. Students enrolled in technical or vocational paths mostly choose to seek employment immediately, showing the impact of the educational path on their future choices. The impact of the chosen track on post-school life expectations is confirmed by a high association coefficient, as observed in Table 7, where the influence of social background is already established.

	<i>Migratory Back-ground</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>School Track</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Non-native</i>	<i>native</i>		<i>General</i>	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Vocational</i>	
<i>Looking for a job</i>	30.0%	25.5%	26.1%	7.7%	45.8%	58.2%	26.0%
<i>Professional training</i>	5.5%	5.6%	5.6%	3.5%	7.3%	11.5%	5.7%
<i>Looking for a job and continuing education (at the tertiary level)</i>	28.2%	20.7%	21.7%	25.9%	16.2%	15.7%	21.6%
<i>Continuing education (at the tertiary level)</i>	36.3%	48.2%	46.6%	63.0%	30.7%	14.5%	46.6%
<i>Total</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 8. Cross table: Future life expectations * Migratory Background: Valid cases: 2791; Contingency coeff.: 0.087; Chi square: 21.344; df 3; sign.000. Cross table: Future life expectations * School Track: Valid cases: 2861; Contingency coeff.: 0.467; Chi square: 798.829; df 6; sign.000. Source: author's elaboration

	<i>Grade Repetition</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Overall Achievement</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Repetition (one and more)</i>	<i>Regular</i>		<i>Low</i>	<i>Mid-dle-low</i>	<i>Mid-dle</i>	<i>Mid-dle-high</i>	<i>High</i>	
<i>Looking for a job</i>	45.4%	23.0%	26.0 %	50.7%	33.3%	22.1%	10.0%	7.6%	26.0%
<i>Professional training</i>	14.2%	4.4%	5.7%	10.8%	7.4%	3.4%	3.1%	4.1%	5.7%
<i>Looking for a job and continuing education (at the tertiary level)</i>	15.5%	22.6%	21.6 %	14.6%	22.3%	23.8%	23.8%	23.3%	21.7%
<i>Continuing education (at the tertiary level)</i>	25.0%	50.0%	46.6 %	23.9%	36.9%	50.6%	63.2%	65.1%	46.6%
<i>Total</i>	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %

Table 9. Cross table: Future life expectations * Grade Repetition: Valid cases: 2861; Contingency coeff.: 0.239; Chi square: 173.421; df 3; sign.000. Cross table: Future life expectations * Overall Achievement: Valid cases: 2860; Contingency coeff.: 0.362 Chi square: 431.046; df 12; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

Future expectations are shaped by the student's school experience, including educational achievements and repetitions. Those who have experienced failures and therefore non-linear paths are more inclined to enter the workforce (45%) rather than continue their studies (25%). The choice to enrol higher education is widely observed among students who have reported linear school pathways, characterised by no

repetition (50%), and have achieved high school performance (65%). There is a positive association between self-reported student performance and the likelihood of pursuing tertiary education. Only 7% of those who have reported high overall school achievements choose to enter the labour market, compared to 50% who declare lower performance.

	Grade Repetition		Total	Overall Achievement					Total
	Repetition (one and more)	Regular		Low	Mid-low	Mid	Mid-high	High	
Looking for a job	45.4%	23.0%	26.0%	50.7%	33.3%	22.1%	10.0%	7.6%	26.0%
Professional training	14.2%	4.4%	5.7%	10.8%	7.4%	3.4%	3.1%	4.1%	5.7%
Looking for a job and continuing education (at the tertiary level)	15.5%	22.6%	21.6%	14.6%	22.3%	23.8%	23.8%	23.3%	21.7%
Continuing education (at the tertiary level)	25.0%	50.0%	46.6%	23.9%	36.9%	50.6%	63.2%	65.1%	46.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 9. Cross table: Future life expectations * Grade Repetition: Valid cases: 2861; Contingency coeff.: 0.239; Chi square: 173.421; df 3; sign.000. Cross table: Future life expectations * Overall Achievement: Valid cases: 2860; Contingency coeff.: 0.362 Chi square: 431.046; df 12; sign.000. Source: authors' elaboration.

In the last model, we focus on the impact of individual and pathway variables on the decisions made by respondents after completing education. The estimates got from our analysis provide additional support for the findings discovered in previous sections. The student's track choices and their school experience exert the greatest impact on the dependent variable. Social origin influences the chosen school track, which in turn plays a crucial role in determining post-school choices, especially in terms of tertiary education. General track significantly increases the chances of enrolling in a tertiary education by at least 17 points, in contrast to technical institutes, which have a smaller impact on continuing education. The impact of academic performance and repetitions, on which the influence of social origin and chosen school track is known, is widely recognised and equally significant. Having experienced linear educational paths, with no repetitions, increases the likelihood of pursuing tertiary education, as does reporting on overall school achievements. The component of "performance" in terms of school achievements proves to be a key factor in explaining variations in post-school choices, especially when results are high. The effect of

<i>Future expectations</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)</i>	
						<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>
<i>University and work</i>	<i>Intercept</i>	-2.839	0.275	0.000			
	<i>Social Origin (metric)</i>	0.174	0.064	0.007	1.190	1.050	1.349
	<i>Female</i>	0.666	0.125	0.000	1.947	1.522	2.489
	<i>Grade repetition (regular)</i>	0.791	0.184	0.000	2.207	1.539	3.163
	<i>Migratory Background</i>	-0.431	0.168	0.010	0.650	0.468	0.903
	<i>Overall achievement - middle low</i>	0.647	0.184	0.000	1.910	1.332	2.740
	<i>Overall achievement - middle</i>	1.235	0.180	0.000	3.439	2.417	4.893
	<i>Overall achievement - middle high</i>	1.667	0.218	0.000	5.296	3.456	8.117
	<i>Overall achievement - high</i>	1.588	0.255	0.000	4.892	2.970	8.060
	<i>General track</i>	2.116	0.180	0.000	8.295	5.834	11.794
	<i>Technical track</i>	0.294	0.184	0.109	1.342	0.937	1.923
<i>University</i>	<i>Intercept</i>	-3.413	0.266	0.000			
	<i>Social Origin (metric)</i>	0.378	0.059	0.000	1.459	1.301	1.637
	<i>Female</i>	0.706	0.115	0.000	2.027	1.619	2.537
	<i>Grade repetition (regular)</i>	0.746	0.162	0.000	2.109	1.536	2.897
	<i>Migratory Background</i>	0.087	0.164	0.594	1.091	0.792	1.504
	<i>Overall achievement - middle low</i>	0.633	0.165	0.000	1.883	1.362	2.603
	<i>Overall achievement - middle</i>	1.524	0.161	0.000	4.588	3.345	6.294
	<i>Overall achievement - middle high</i>	2.054	0.197	0.000	7.796	5.295	11.477
	<i>Overall achievement - high</i>	2.013	0.233	0.000	7.487	4.743	11.819
	<i>General track</i>	2.877	0.177	0.000	17.755	12.540	25.139
	<i>Technical track</i>	0.912	0.177	0.000	2.489	1.759	3.522
a. The reference category is: work and professional training							

Table 10. Determinants of School Track. Multinomial Logistic Regression model; [Number of valid cases 2767; Overall percentage predicted correctly: 63.1; Log likelihood 4384.266; Cox and Snell.350; Nagelkerke.398; Chi square: 1190.529; df: 20; sign:.000]. Source: authors' elaboration.

social background is absorbed by both performance and the chosen track. Social background loses some of its influence and becomes less significant for the choice of immediately entering the labour market and simultaneously enrolling in a university field of study. Demographic variables show that females have an advantage in pursuing further studies for both categories in the dependent variable, as observed empirically. The influence of migratory background on pursuing higher education and seeking employment simultaneously becomes less important when considering only the tertiary level.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The analysis presented in this local survey strongly supports the existing literature on how social background influences educational decisions. Additionally, the analysis underscores the non-neutral nature of the educational system's structure (length of common core and system of tracks; Benadusi & Giancola, 2014) in facilitating individual and family choices. Opposed, the evidence shows that the form of the educational system shapes the degrees of freedom of students' (and their families') choices, which, however, the socio-economic and cultural status of the families themselves strongly conditions (Giancola & Colarusso, 2020). The analyses conducted allow us to highlight a significant effect of social origin on educational careers, in terms of track choices between general, technical, and vocational. In terms of self-perceived performance and repetitions, the relation between the chosen track and academic results shows a second effect. Students' future choices seem to be significantly influenced by their individual school experiences, including track choice, school achievements, and repetitions, which can (re)producing social inequalities. We can observe a clear chain effect, where social origin directly shapes choices made at the beginning of the educational pathway and indirectly affects subsequent choices, school achievements, and repetitions. The choice between tertiary education and entering the labour market immediately is influenced by a series of factors that start with one's social background. These effects have an impact at different level of the educational pathway, thus shaping future expectations. As set out at the beginning of this contribution, educational choices have not individual but collective effects. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that systematic inequalities, like the ones mentioned, have considerable effects on both individuals and communities.

This underscores the need for policy interventions that are meaningful, urgent, and rooted in research data, as outlined in this paper.

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EDUCATION AS COMMONS

Selected Papers from AIS Education International Mid-Term Conference 2023

This volume stems from papers presented at the mid-term conference of the Education Section of the AIS (Italian Association of Sociology), held in Palermo, Italy, on April 12-14, 2023. Under the theme Education as Commons: Democratic Values, Social Justice, and Inclusion in Education, the conference inspired a call for extended contributions to capture key insights shared there. Reflecting the conference's pluralistic approach, the volume includes sociological and interdisciplinary perspectives, with both theoretical and empirical contributions that employ a range of methods—from qualitative to quantitative and mixed—and languages.

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