

THE RIGHT CHOICE

With more than 4000 different occupations to choose from, it is not surprising that many young people are undecided about what they want to do with their lives.

It is important to remember that adjustments can always be made. A career is an evolving process; some changes will be inevitable. As you grow you develop new interests and new skills. You will discover new talents and meet new people. Your values will also change. It is therefore not unusual for a person to have more than one job in his working life. The most important consideration is to select a field of study in which you have an interest and some ability.

Career choice and subject selection is interdependent. Career choice is both determined by your subject choice and your subject selection may define your career choice. Wise subject selection is a prerequisite to career entry. It is well known that the doors to many careers are closed if certain subjects are not written for Matric. Particular requirements have to be met for entry into tertiary education at Universities and Universities of Technology. Subjects chosen for Matric will determine whether one is eligible for acceptance or not, regardless of other criteria.

Thorough career research and planning helps learners to realise who they are, what they will be able to do in the workplace and what they are capable of achieving in the future. Learners must investigate which subjects are needed for careers of their choice. They should keep their options open by choosing more than one possible career path. The importance of Mathematics and Science as subjects must be considered carefully. Whilst many careers require Mathematics as a school subject, it is true that some very respectable careers do not require it (e.g. Law, Psychology, and Journalism). Every aspect of modern life relies increasingly on technology and the keys to working with technology are Mathematics and Science.

There is a theory that people who choose Maths and Science at school show that they are willing and able to cope with change and new technology. Except for the two languages, Mathematics and Science are the only two subjects that can be regarded as compulsory for some careers. A subject like Economics or Accountancy, is for example, handy but not necessary if you want to do a commerce degree. Many learners think that Information Technology is a compulsory subject to take for any career in which you will have to work with computers. This is not true. Many short term computer courses can teach you the necessary skills to use a computer effectively. IT involves far more than mere user skills, although these are included.

DECISION MAKING

You have to make many decisions every day in your life. Some of these decisions require very little thought and information, for example, choosing what to wear in the morning or which cereal to have for breakfast. These decisions are often made impulsively because there are not any serious implications to them and they concern your immediate needs.

There are other decisions, however, which have a much greater bearing on your life and require a more rational approach to solving them, for example, decisions about your career. These decisions can be very hard to make and often lead to confusion. If you are systematic in your approach to decision, making much of this confusion and these problems can be eliminated.

Follow the steps outlined and you should be able to make decisions more wisely.

D Determine the problem

The first step in solving a problem is to acknowledge that the problem, exists and to believe that change is possible. Write down a clear analysis of your problem. (Problem = subject choice must be made.)

E Explore the options

Once you have recognised and described the problem the next step is to explore the problem and your options. List every possible solution to your problem. (List possible careers of interest/suitability.)

C Collect information

It is important to gather all the information you can. In making personal decisions, two kinds of information are important: *first*, is information about yourself; *second*, is objective facts about the situation. When collecting information, do not try to evaluate or eliminate any options as you may make the mistake of closing your options too soon. (Research careers: give useful websites addresses here.)

I Interpret the information in the context of the problem and options

This is probably the most important step as you now have to sort and weigh information about your various alternatives. There are several strategies that you may use to think through the information about your options. One way of analysing the information is to list the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

(Positive and negative aspects of career. NB: to be aware of negatives right from the beginning.)

D Decide

After you have defined the problem and collected and analysed the information, it should be fairly easy to choose which option is best for you. However, you may have difficulty if one option seems better in some ways and another option is better in other ways. Similarly, you may be faced with a problem if no option is better than any other. If you experience these problems, go back to the interpreting stage and re-evaluate. Remember it is very rare that we find options that satisfy all our needs.

(Make choice and inform school.)

E Enact and examine your decision

Plan your next steps and examine the consequences or implications of your decision.

Remember you are responsible for the decision you make.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW AND FIND OUT BEFORE I DECIDE?

You have to take your future field of study into consideration when you choose your subjects. Use the following information to establish in which direction you will continue your studies.

FIELDS OF STUDY •

Humanities

You work with or for people by teaching, helping or informing them.

Careers: Actors, Journalists, Psychologists, Librarians, Social Workers, and Teachers

• Natural Sciences

You would work with biological, chemical, physical and medical information.

Careers: Doctors, Dentists, Paramedics, Botanists, Zoologists, Pharmacists.

• Economic Sciences

In this career area you would work with people or equipment. You plan, control and check purchases and sales, organise and administer offices, factories, etc.

Careers: IT professionals, Mathematicians, Managers, Accountants and Administrators.

• Engineering or Technical Sciences

In this field you will work with concrete facts and equipment. You will design, manufacture, create and experiment.

Careers: Engineers, Building experts, Electricians, and Architects.

Which are your best subjects?

Take a good look at the subjects where you achieve the most marks. You will do well in a subject which you enjoy. It is no good taking a subject in which you do not get high marks because that means that you will not do well in a career which requires something that you have not mastered. Many teenagers mistakenly think that the end of their school year marks the beginning of their career path.

In actual fact, many of them have been on that path for years; through school studies, recreational activities and hobbies.

SOURCES OF SELF KNOWLEDGE

- You yourself
- Your parents and family
- Your teachers
- Your best friends
- Psychological Tests — Aptitude, Interest and Personality.

Through discussions and by giving the matter a great deal of thought and being honest with yourself you will be able to answer the following questions about yourself.

- What are my true abilities?
- What are my weak points?
- What do I find interesting?
- What does not interest me at all?
- Do I prefer working with people or rather on my own?
- What personality traits are decisive in my choice of a career?

Refer to the following statements to obtain self - knowledge.

I would like working on my own / alone.

I would like working with equipment / instruments

I like working with figures

I like talking to and communicating with people

Medicine and the human body functions interest me

I like working in a laboratory and doing experiments

I like working with tools and making or fixing things

I like reading and writing

I like creative / artistic work

I find it easy to appear in public

I am good at organising and planning

I prefer working with objects / things

I work well with my hands

I am capable of swift and effective reasoning

I prefer spending most of my time outdoors

I like listening to what other people have to say

I would like having a job that involves a lot of travel

If you compare your answers to these statements to the description of the main fields of study, in which direction do you think you should study?

WHY?

SOURCES OF CAREER KNOWLEDGE

Career guides and magazines in the Counselling Department. *(Due to COVID we have very few hard copies of applications/prospectus etc. from universities. These documents are now available online from the varsity websites.)*

The Career Guidance Sections of Tertiary institutions such as University.

Your School Counsellor

PACE (<http://www.pacecareers.com/services.html>)

ACADEMIC versus TECHNICAL CAREERS

World-wide there has been a paradigm shift from the purely academic needs in a society to the applied and technological needs of the job market. Certain academic careers had a social status attached to them not afforded to the technical careers, but that has changed drastically over the last decades. The demand in the job market is for highly skilled technical people who can be employed in the manufacturing sector, which contributes to the growth side of our economy.