

COLUMN

CONVERGE TO ONE UNIQUE PATH

One crucial aspect to remember is that this decision you are making regarding your career or higher education pathway is a stepping stone and not a destination



IN THE LAST FEW articles, we learnt how to identify and organise our interests, skills and values and explore the various career clusters and career pathways. By this stage, I hope you have created an inventory of possible career options after thoroughly evaluating the different aspects discussed previously. Some of these aspects could be job descriptions, employment prospects, the potential for growth, tangible education and related career pathways, and the interplay with your skills, interests and values.

Now, we come to the toughest stage – making a decision. The most helpful and crucial element in this process is your knowledge and awareness of yourself. This self-understanding is the core of good decision-making and is your best guide. In addition, a tool that can help you is the PACED decision-making method which can facilitate problem-solving in a rational, systematic way.

PACED is an acronym that expands as follows:

P	=	Problem
A	=	Alternatives
C	=	Criteria
E	=	Evaluate
D	=	Decision

Stating or defining the problem

The first step would be to understand and define the problem that must be solved. It relates to the area where you have a dilemma. In the case of career planning, the "problem" would be your need to select a career for you from your shortlisted options.

Listing the alternatives

The next step is to identify and list the possible options for solving the problem. In this case, this would mean your potential career choices. Make a grid listing all your top picks. These could include those that match your skills, or your interests. It is also important to ensure that

your choices match with your core values as this can help you land in a career that is personally fulfilling.

Identifying the criteria

Once you have listed the various alternatives, you need to figure out the features that make these a viable option for you. List down the factors that will influence your preference. What are the important things to think about each alternative? It would help if you determined the values and needs that are being satisfied by each choice. Some examples for criteria could be your passion for the career, the meaning it would offer, the remuneration and potential lifestyle it promises, and the opportunity for growth and career progression. Focus on aspects that make each option seem better than another. You can also add factors like the cost of tuition, standardised tests, and other entrance criteria.



Evaluating alternatives

Once you have the data, you can present it visually, perhaps as a grid or a spreadsheet for ease of comparison. Ask yourself these: how well does each career meet your criteria? Think of the pros and cons of each choice. Visualise the future ahead under

each selection, the potential outcomes and barriers. This exercise can let you anticipate obstacle and even proactively come up with solutions. You can also consider giving each of the alternatives a rating from 1 to 5 (1 indicating least and 5 being the highest score) under each criterion, based on how each of these careers satisfy the said criteria. Adding a numerical value helps to quantify the process and offer an objective assessment.

Making a decision

Finally, you come to the point of finalising one or two choices selections as the best for you, based on the evaluations. You may do so by comparing the parameters. If you have assigned a score under each criterion, add up the values for all the criteria to get a total score for that career option. Have clear, open conversations with your family as often this may also be a family decision that affects everyone.

One crucial aspect to remember is that this decision you are making regarding your career or higher education pathway is a stepping stone and not a destination. It is always possible to deviate or change paths as you learn and grow.

Most of the higher education courses offer transferable skills that guarantee access to diverse kinds of opportunities. After experiencing a greater understanding of the field through their higher education, many graduates go on to pursue careers that are slightly or even totally different from what they first imagined for themselves.

Hence, take this as the first milestone of a lifetime of self-discovery and growth.

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