

Spoiled By Choice

Choosing subjects and courses for students

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Many secondary students face difficult decisions regarding subject and course choices for the coming year.

School subject selection leads to tertiary course choices and ultimately occupations.

Selecting an area that will be satisfying in the long term requires a combination of a large amount of information.

Firstly, it is important to consider aptitudes, or what the student is good at. Often this is evident in their school results, but not always. They also need to consider whether they wish to continue with formal study, and therefore what subjects are prerequisites in their chosen interest area.

Secondly, students should consider their preference areas. These relate to aspects of their chosen occupation (and study course). For example, some people are very practical, and despite doing well in many academic subjects are happiest when working directly with materials. Other people may consider it very important to work in a natural / outdoors environment, rather than being inside working at a computer.

Finally, the personality of the student is also important. This can be a crucial factor in determining whether they are happy in their chosen occupation. For example, some people are very sociable, and are happiest when they are interacting with others. These people should look for occupations which allow for a large amount of contact with other people (for example as a teacher), rather than working in isolation (as a research scientist would for example).

So, at the time of the year when preferences have to be selected, try to balance all of these three areas, to find a course and ultimately an occupation which satisfies all of your needs.

It is recommended that students take some time to think about their aptitudes, interests and personality when they make this choice. Making a list of personal strengths and weaknesses, and the skills and environments offered by the occupations you are considering is the best way to think through choices. If students still feel uncertain, they can seek a vocational assessment from a psychologist to clarify their choices.

Debbie Anderson specialises in psychological assessment. She can be contacted at The Psychological Assessment Centre on **3832 0517**.