

Career Choice – Who decides?

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After schooling for what seemed to be years, Fred, a law graduate, found himself in a compelling situation. He had finally started work in the type of role he thought his education merited. His dream while in school was always to earn a big salary as a result of having gained the required education. But now he found himself in a government job where the only benefit he could identify was that he was giving service to the people... Making a career choice is not unlike any other long term decision you make. You optimize on the decision when you are aware of the options and understand why you are making the decision before actually making it. In this case, Fred may not have really understood what he wanted out of his career and what it would take to get it.

The most basic decision making model known to this writer is AIDA. It suggests that when making a decision to do something, an individual initially has to be aware and understand enough to become interested to establish a desire and then take action accordingly. When a decision is made following these supposedly simple steps it gives more assurance that the individual will be happier with the decision taken and continue to reinforce it with time. But how often does this apply when it comes to the career choices we have made or are about to make?

Dr. Mwami of the University of Dar Es Salaam once declared that there was a technical divorce between the academic and social conceptualization in our education system and I couldn't agree more! One can argue, as a result, that in

the current system academic achievement does not necessarily equate to social applicability. It was very common during my school days to have the best students in class progress on to science streams simply because of the higher grades they realized; in which case your results would dictate your career choice. Not that there is anything wrong with this, but it forgoes the logic established above of arriving at an effective and sustainable decision, where instead one finds himself moving from awareness straight into action without factoring in interest and desire based on understanding first.

It is pivotal that we understand our career choices as a career is not necessarily the job you hold or your profession, but the whole experience. As a result one profession could in effect mean many things to different people. For example, Fred was interested in the monetary gains attached to a prestigious legal profession. But, in effect, there are different types of lawyers, some of which have as a principle calling the objective to oversee justice and give service to those who need it without the prospects of monetary gain; maybe not as prestigious but it works for some. The only way to make your career work is to be aware and understand all these considerations before taking a decision. Had Fred known in advance, would have he still been interest enough to establish a desire to take the same decision?

We are continually exposed in our day to day engagements to people who have given up on what they are doing, and people who force their careers to do what they weren't meant to do at the expense of others; all this simply because they made the wrong career choice to begin with. Education is not the only culprit but it is definitely pivotal. Education has the principle purpose of enabling us to learn and learn some more so that we can independently make such

decisions. So if you were to ask me who should decide on your career, the answer would be simple – you!