DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

An individual can solve problems more realistically when he/she uses a decision-making process. This process, when understood and applied, can assist you in making study and vocational decision(s) and future decisions, about your life. One thing to remember is that ***YOU*** are in charge of any decisions to be made. You may seek help and advice from other people and other sources, but the final decision must be made by you.

There are several steps involved in the decision-making process:

1. Reaching a decision-point (Defining the problem)
2. Exploration of the problem (Gathering information)
3. Evaluation of information (Weighing the evidence)
4. Choice of a plan of action (Choosing possible alternatives)
5. Taking action on your plan
6. Clarification and review of plans (Outgoing - Ongoing)

1. Reaching a Decision Point (Defining the Problem)

A decision point is reached when you become aware of a specific problem and see the need to make a decision. Before you can solve a problem however, you have to know what the problem is. You must be able to interpret the entire picture so that the problem is clearly understood. For example, if you want to plan and establish an educational plan to reach a career goal you might work toward arriving at well-considered answers to the following questions:

1. For what kind of career am I best suited?
2. For what kind of an alternative career am I best suited?
3. For what kind of education and training am I best suited?
4. For what kind of alternative education or training am I best suited?

2. Exploration of the Problem (Gathering Information)

This is the initial activity of decision-making in which you think about all of the possibilities related to the problem and the decision. You must look for all the alternatives open to you before you make a decision. This is done by collecting relevant information. Some areas important to vocational decision-making which should be investigated are:

1. Physical attributes and health
2. Leisure experiences
3. Work experiences
4. Opinions of parents and others
5. Values and standards
6. Study - the amount of time and efficiency of your studying

7. Marital plans
8. Financial needs
9. Social status needs
10. Academic ability and achievement
11. Personality traits
12. Interests
13. Occupational and education facts (information about occupation, requirements of different kinds of jobs, educational level necessary, etc.)

3. Evaluation of Information (Weighing the Evidence)

You should consider all of the alternatives open and how they are related to you. This step is the one in which each bit of information gathered is considered separately and then as a whole. You should be able to evaluate where you stand concerning the above individual areas and to the total picture.

4. Choice of Plan of Action (Choosing Possible Alternatives)

In this step you choose between the alternatives open to you, remembering that the information you gathered will vary in importance to you. In this step you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the best vocational choice you can make?
2. What is the second best choice?
3. What is the best educational course to follow?

5. Taking Action

In this step you take action on the plans you made in step number 4. How can you implement these plans (educationally, training, etc.)?

6. Clarification and Review of Plans

In this step you make periodic examinations of your choice and plans. You should continually check to make sure your decision is the best one possible at the time. You may have to review your decision due to new information and new experiences. Therefore, at times, you may see the need to alter your plans. Also, reviewing will help you see that the decision-making process leads to sound plans and you will have logical reasons why you decided upon the educational and career objectives that you did.