

Students' perception of the impact of Guidance and Counseling programmes on the Satisfaction of Vocational needs in selected Kenyan secondary schools.

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Abstract

The need to have vocational guidance and counseling integrated into the secondary school curriculum has become more necessary in the modern times than it was several years ago. This could be so due to changing nature of job opportunities, job scarcity, explosion of knowledge and new technologies. Vocational Guidance and Counseling is offered to meet learners career needs, aspirations and job mobility. The objective of the study was to determine students' perception of the impact of guidance and counseling programme on the satisfaction of vocational needs. The research study was guided by Gestalt theory of perception. The theory was appropriate because of the complex psychological backgrounds which informed the respondents' perceptions. The target population for the study was all students drawn from secondary schools in North and South Rift Valley region of Kenya. Four hundred and fifty students were selected through stratified random sampling from ten secondary schools. Self – developed questionnaires were used for data collection. Ex post facto research design was utilized for the study. The reliability of the instrument was SPQ = 0.893. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) used to test null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The content validity was ascertain through expert judgement opinion. The findings indicated that the respondents perception on the impact of guidance and counseling on satisfaction of vocational needs was uncertain (neutral perception) which meant that the impact was not significant. Students were not convince that the guidance programme has had any effect on self-employment skills, learning about talents, career available outside Kenya and career mentoring. The Category of School (Mixed Boarding) was found significant in its influence on perception of students of on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs while age, gender, school type and class levels was found insignificant. This paper recommends reviewing the vocational guidance programmes to be more practical and consumer friendly for it to be more appealing to learners in order to satisfy their career needs. The paper concludes with a suggestion that vocational guidance can be entrenched in the regular school curriculum for it to be more visible and creation of awareness on the value of vocational guidance and counseling.

Key Words: Students, Gestalt perception, guidance, counseling, satisfaction, vocation needs

1.0 Introduction

Guidance and counseling programme is a programme which has been given pivoted role since Kenya attained its independence. For instance the first education commission (Ominde report of 1964) stressed the need for vocational guidance and counseling in schools with the purpose of preparing Kenyans to take over skilled jobs from expatriates. The vocational needs of the guidance and counseling programme were therefore emphasized more than other needs then. The 2005/2010 Kenya Education Sector support program KESSP, (MOEST, 2005) recommended the strengthening of guidance and counseling programs in school to reduce number of learners with problems in school by encouraging more students to seek career counseling, less application to change university courses and improved examinations performance for all students. One of the national goals of Education as in (MOEST, 2007) is to promote social, economical, technological and industrial needs for national development and to promote individual development and self- fulfillment where guidance and counseling programme is expected to play a leading role.

According to Biswalo (2000) vocational guidance and counseling is defined as the process of assisting an individual to choose a vocation, prepare for it, to enter it and to progress in it. Every vocation requires certain education and professional qualifications. Students are assisted to make decisions and plan for their future and build a career. They are helped in developing an integrated picture of themselves and of their role in professional world and occupations. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2002) contends that vocational guidance and counseling is widely accepted as a powerful and effective tool of helping to bridge the gap between education and the world of work as well as between the school and the society. It is

also a means of assisting young people to make appropriate educational choices that enable them develop their potential and to have access to career opportunities that are compatible with their interests and abilities. Ministry of Education MOE (2007) recommends secondary education curriculum that produces citizens with skills, knowledge, expertise and personal qualities that are required to support a growing economy while Owiro (1996) emphasized equipping secondary school students for career identification. Sindabi and Wanyama (2002) stressed students human competence and potential in the selection of the vocation.

The sum of vocational guidance is to lead the individual pupil from a state of dependence to a state of independence choice making and action. It is generally accepted that vocational guidance and counseling should be accompanied by counseling which is made available to all pupils throughout their school life and should form a carefully planned program of career orientation. Systematic guidance and counseling services may lead to a drastic reduction of wastage that occurs at many levels of the education.

UNESCO, (2002) explain that vocational guidance is assistance given to individuals or groups of individuals in addressing problems related to occupational and life choices, offering full opportunities for personal development and work satisfaction. Vocational counseling hence facilitates the acquisition of interests, beliefs, values, work habits and personal qualities enabling each participant to create a satisfactory life in constantly changing cultural, social and work environment (UNESCO, 1990). Some of the areas at satisfying vocation needs in guidance and counseling programme in secondary schools which were investigated were career awareness, career information provided, career tests, career searching skills, cultivation of talents and abilities, work ethics, career clubs, choice of subjects in line with a career, career placement or shadowing experiences, industrial visits, motivational talks on careers, career decision skills, self – employment skills, occupational information available in school among others.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Guidance and counseling programme has been defined by many scholars as a programme in secondary school which is concerned with determining and providing for the developmental needs of learners. A good definition of guidance and counseling program should focus on wholistic nature which include personal, academic, social, vocational among others. In Kenya great emphasis has been placed on guidance and counseling services in learning institutions. Although a lot of efforts have been put in place for effective guidance and counseling services, the results has been too little to bring about significant career help among the learners. Most learners complete secondary education without a clear picture of which careers are best suited for them as indicated by the way secondary school graduates continuously revise their career opportunities even upto the time of joining or learning in university. Others who are not lucky to join university or tertiary levels training end up being wasted hence become idle. Many studies on guidance and counseling has been done on the perception on many aspects yet this area has not been fully explored hence the need to undertake the present study which was to investigate the perceptions of students on the impact of guidance and counseling on the satisfaction of vocational needs of the students.

The study was guided by Gestalt Theory of perceptions. Gestalt means ‘an organized whole’. It also means pattern or configuration of the whole. According to this theory human nature is seen as being organized into patterns or wholes. Perl (1973) contends that humans do not perceive things in isolation but organized them through perception process into wholes.

For instance a car carries different and even greater meaning than its individual components. The perception of guidance and counseling programme was considered in the context of the whole as represented by the overall mean which implied that the learners perception were either positive (satisfied), neutral (not sure) or negative perception (dissatisfied) by the implementation of the program with respect to vocational needs.

1.2 Methods and Procedures

The research study adopted ex post facto design. This design was suitable because the variables were naturally occurring. The study population comprised all secondary schools within south and north rift regions of Kenya which were categorized as public and private ten secondary schools were randomly selected from five counties. The secondary schools were further stratified as boarding or day, single or mixed. From the sampled schools a total of 450 students were randomly selected. Each county was represented by two secondary schools which were stratified as public or private. Class lists were used to get respondents that formed part of the sample in every form. In total there were 250 males and 200 females from public and private schools respectively which reflected their proportion in the population.

Student perception questionnaires (SPQ) comprised two categories that of bio data information and the perception of students on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs. The items were structured in the form of Likert scale. To ascertain face and content validity expert opinion was sought through experts in Educational Psychology Department.

The reliability of the instrument was obtained through internal consistency method after pilot study and it was found to be $r = 0.893$ which was considered acceptable for this study. The instrument was scored in a positive direction so that the higher the score the more positive perception hence more satisfied. The lower score indicate dissatisfaction hence negative perception. The uncertainty responses indicated neutral perceptions which meant students could not realistically identify the value of the guidance programme with respect to the vocational needs.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires and the return rate was 88.9 which was considered high. The scoring of the instrument was done in a likert type scale which had 3 to 1 in order of satisfied (3), not sure (2) and dissatisfied (1). Descriptive statistics were done by use of means specifically the scoring was done as follows: dissatisfied (negative) below 1.7, not sure (uncertainty) was from 1.8 to 2.4 and satisfied (positive) was from 2.5 and above.

Objectives of the study

1. To describe the nature of students perception on the impact of guidance and counseling on students vocational needs satisfaction.
2. To determine the relationship of students personal characteristics on their perception of the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs satisfaction.
3. To determine the relationship of school characteristics on the perception of the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs satisfaction.

Hypotheses

- HO₁:** There is no significant statistical relationship between students' personal characteristics and their perception on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs on vocational needs satisfaction.
- HO₂:** There is no significant statistical difference in perception of the effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling on vocational needs satisfaction due to school characteristics.

1.3 Data Analysis and Results

Data was analyzed using t – test and ANOVA. This was done hypothesis by hypothesis. The first part of data analysis describe the nature of perception of students on the impact of guidance and counseling based on selected items of the vocational needs which was presented in form of means as indicated in table 1.

From this table thirteen of the twenty items in the vocational needs had a mean statistic lying between 1.88 and 2.35, these items includes career information availed in school regularly, career booklets and brochures, industrial visits, career mentoring and modeling, volunteering work, career searching skills, curriculum vitae (CV) writing, job application letter writing, career available outside Kenya, link between the school and the world of works, career clubs in school and career placement. This implies that students were uncertain with regard to the impact of guidance and counseling programme on vocational needs from the pattern of the overall mean (2.28).

Only seven of the twenty items with means lying between 2.42 and 2.69 were career talks, career awareness, choice of subjects, skills on self – employment, career decision skills, learning about individual talents/abilities, motivation to succeed in careers. These items indicated that students perceived that guidance and counseling services provided by their schools has had an effect on these items hence students were satisfied.

The overall mean was 2.28 which showed that the guidance and counseling programme did not impact on the vocational needs of the students due to the fact that most students had indifferent responses. Generally it showed the students could not attribute high value to the programme with regard to helping them satisfy their vocational needs and aspirations.

Table 1: General perception of students on vocational needs

Guidance and counseling in relation to	Mean	Perception
1. Career awareness in school	2.69	Positive
2. Career information available in school regularly	2.35	Uncertainty
3. Choice of subjects	2.56	Positive
4. Career decision skills	2.56	Positive
5. Talks on career to students	2.48	Uncertainty
6. Career week organized in school	1.78	negative
7. Availability of career booklets, pamphlets, brochures.	1.96	Uncertainty
8. Industrial visits to learn about work	1.88	Uncertainty
9. Career mentoring and modeling	2.12	Uncertainty
10. Skills on self - employment	2.52	Positive
11. Career searching skills	2.21	Uncertainty
12. Writing of curriculum vitae	2.12	Uncertainty
13. Writing of job application letters	2.18	Uncertainty
14. Learning about industrial talents/abilities	2.50	Positive
15. Motivation to succeed in careers	2.48	Uncertainty
16. Career available outside Kenya	2.24	Uncertainty
17. Link between school work and world of work	1.98	Uncertainty
18. Career clubs in school	2.36	Uncertainty
19. Volunteering work	2.42	Uncertainty
20. Career placement in school	2.19	Uncertainty
Overall mean	2.28	Uncertainty

HO₁: There is no significant statistical difference in students personal characteristics and their perception of the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programme on vocational needs satisfaction.

Personal characteristics were represented by gender and age of the students. T – test was used to analyzed the data and the results are shown on table 2.

Table 2: Gender and perception on vocational needs

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	233	2.26	.42
Female	167	2.30	.43

Independent sample test

	T	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Equal variances assumed	-1.073	398	.284
Equal variances not assumed	-1.065	348	.287

The findings showed that the means for male and female students on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs is similar. To test the null hypothesis t - test results shows that there was no statistically significant difference in students perception on the impact of guidance and counseling on students vocational needs by gender.

The null hypothesis was therefore accepted implying gender didn't influence the perception of students on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs. Hence their perception is somewhat similar this could be explained in terms of the regularized schedules in school which is somehow the same.

Age and perception on vocational needs

Data was analyzed using ANOVA and the results are shown in table 3.

Table 3 : Age and perception on vocational needs.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F.	Sig.
Between groups	.672	2	.33	1.874	.155
Within groups	71.223	397	.17		
Total	71.895	399			

ANOVA results indicate no significant difference on the impact of guidance and counseling on students vocational needs by the age of the students. From these results the null hypothesis failed to be rejected which implied that the age of the students didn't significantly influence their perception on the satisfaction of vocational needs. Their perception were somewhat the same on the vocational needs satisfaction.

HO₂: There is no significant statistical difference between school characteristics and students perception on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling on vocational needs satisfaction. School characteristics were represented in this study by the type of school, class level and the school category, T – test was performed to test its significant.

Table 4: Type of school and perception on vocational needs

Type of school	N	Mean	SD
Public	240	2.31	.44
Private	160	2.23	.39

Independent sample test

	T	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Equal variances assumed	1.767	398	.078
Equal variances not assumed	1.816	370	.070

The findings shows that there is no statistically significant difference on the impact of guidance and counseling on students' vocational needs by the type of school. From the findings the null hypothesis that the type of school had no significant effect on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs is supported and concluded that the type of school didn't influence the perception of students on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs.

Table 5: School category and perception on vocational needs

Data was analysed using ANOVA.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F.	Sig.
Between groups	2.209	3	.73	4.183	.006
Within groups	69.686	396	.17		
Total	71.895	399			

(I)	(J) category	Mean difference (I – J)	Sig.
Mixed	Boarding	.18*	.001
	Day only	.09	.161
	Single	.11	.077
Boarding	Mixed	-.18*	.001
	Day only	-.09	.184
	Single	-.07	.243
Day only	Mixed	-.09	.161
	Boarding	.09	.184
	Single	.02	.830
Single	Mixed	-.11	.077
	Boarding	.07	.243
	Day only	-.02	.830

The findings indicate that the school category influenced the students perception $P < 0.05$. There is a significant difference $F(3,396) = 4.183, p = 0.006$ on the impact of guidance and counseling program on students vocational needs in the mixed boarding school category.

From these results the null hypothesis that the school category has no significant influence on the perception of students on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling on vocational needs satisfactions is rejected implying that the category of school (mixed, single, day, boarding) where students were drawn from significantly influence their perception on the satisfaction of vocational needs. The mixed boarding school students had more positive perception hence were more satisfied than other categories.

Table 6: Class levels and perceptions on vocational needs

Anova was used to analyzed the data.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F.	Sig.
Between groups	2.209	3	.16	.937	.423
Within groups	69.686	396	.18		
Total	71.895	399			

The findings shows that there is no significance statistical difference in perception on the impact of guidance and counseling on students vocational needs due to class level. From the results the null hypothesis that the class level has no significant influence on the perception on effectiveness of guidance and counseling on vocational needs satisfaction is accepted concluding that the class level form (1, 2, 3 and 4) of the students didn't influence significantly their perception on the satisfaction of vocational needs.

Discussions

The discussions of the results has been done on the context of gestalt principles specifically the whole impression. The overall mean (whole) was used to make judgements. The findings established that the perception of the impact of guidance and counseling on the satisfaction of vocational needs based on the overall mean values was 2.28 indicating a situation of uncertainty as shown in table1. Some of the items in the vocational needs which the respondents were satisfied that the guidance and counseling programme has had positive effects included career awareness, choice of subjects, career decision skills, writing of job application letters, skills on self –employment, learning about individual talents and abilities.

Other items that the respondents registered uncertainty included career clubs in schools, career available outside Kenya, availability of career booklets and pamphlets, career mentoring and modeling, link between school work and world of work and career placement. Since the respondents overally registered uncertainty on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs the validity of the programme is therefore reduced hence dysfunctional with respect to vocational needs of the secondary school students. Inadequate provision of guidance and counseling services that satisfies students' vocational needs may lead to disillusionment and confusion in career choices. The findings agrees with Makinde (1973) who noted that without the correct and variable instruments guidance and counseling programes cannot solve vocational problems experienced by students. In addition the findings support Anwana (1984) and Abiri (1996) who argued that if the society is not to be plagued by group of frustrated and unrealistic individuals, vocational needs should be satisfied. These findings didn't confirm what Oyaziwo & Imonike (2002) found that teachers view counselors as providing information to students to satisfy their career needs. The findings supported what Wells and Ritter (1979) found that students did not view school counseling as an effective source of help in vocational decisions.

The study findings also confirmed what Ngale (2009) concluded that a paltry 9.3% of the respondents in a study indicated they choose career based on professional advice from the guidance and counseling team in the school.

The gender of the students was found to be insignificant in their perception of the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational based on t – test results. In addition the type of school, age of the students were found insignificant in its impact on the perception on vocational needs. Notably students from public schools appeared more satisfied than their colleagues from private schools on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs based on the mean values as shown in table 4. The findings agreed with Atodo (2008) who found that the type of school where students learnt was not significant in influencing their perceptions on effectiveness of guidance and counseling.

The school category where students came from was found to be significant in its influence of guidance and counseling on vocational needs. Specifically students from mixed boarding schools had more positive perception and were more satisfied than students from other categories on vocational needs as exhibited in table 5. Age of the students and their class level was found insignificant in their impact on perception of the students with respect to vocational needs as shown in table 3 and 6. These findings are consistent with the findings of Musgrove (1973) who found in a study that class level was not significant in perception of guidance and counseling.

Conclusions

Based on the discussion of the finding the following conclusions were made: The vocational needs of the students were not adequately satisfied by the implementation of guidance and counseling as currently implemented in most secondary schools in Kenya. The uncertain responses (neutral perception) which resulted in many items on the vocational needs indicated guidance and counseling programme is not functioning, this could be link to other programmes in school which consumes most of the time hence leaving guidance activities with little time which make students not to feel the presence and the place of counseling services.

The findings also revealed that some areas in the guidance programme relating to vocational needs are given minimal attention in the school such as availability of career booklets and brochures, career mentoring, link between school work and world or work, as well as career placement.

Career clubs in school, and career available outside Kenya. This makes students experience difficulty in preparing and choosing careers hence they may not be well equipped to choose suitable vocational when they are getting out of the secondary schools to join university or tertiary institution or self employment sector.

The category of school was found significant in perception on the impact of guidance and counseling on vocational needs. This means that the context (category of school) where the counselors work would demand attention based on unique setting of the schools. The counselors should consider as a privilege working in this contexts and hence tailor their methods and techniques of counseling to the uniqueness of the setting.

Recommendations

The perception of the students towards the guidance and counseling on vocational needs satisfaction is moving towards dissatisfaction implying that guidance and counseling programs are not visible in many schools. Its role in shaping students vocational choices is minimal and largely unseen in many secondary schools.

That there is need to create more awareness among the students on the value of guidance and counseling in their vocational aspirations.

Career placement and shadowing experiences should form part of the main activities of guidance and counseling in the schools.

More linkages should be done between the school work and the world of work through mentorship, volunteer and outreach activities.

Experts in multifaceted fields can be invited to come to school regularly to talk to students on the requirements of their fields in view of the subject choices, mean grades, promotion opportunities and scholarships for mentorship purposes.

Counselors should establish library in the guidance and counseling offices or a section in the school main library where career booklets, brochures, and pamphlets and other useful information on careers are availed to learners labeling the materials is critical.

Career clubs should be organized and coordinated by the guidance and counseling department. One counselor can coordinate this and excellent students in those fields can be patrons e.g. medicine, engineering, journalism, veterinary, agriculture, mathematics, research etc.

Careers opportunities outside Kenya need to be availed to the students while still at school due to the fact of globalization.

Online career information need to be made available and strengthened in schools.

In terms of vocational counseling, orientation of the students should focus more on long term national socio – economic, political and technological priorities and not on short term. This ensures stability in vocational decisions. Vocational information should be emphasized in secondary schools as students prepare to choose subjects or careers at the end of secondary education and also in universities and other tertiary institutions.

Vocational guidance and counseling need to be entrenched in the regular schools curriculum as an important school activity.

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