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Reengineering mass career acquisition through technical vocational education training counseling in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Vocational and Technical Education forms a very key foundation in enabling a nation to achieve aspired MDGs and SDG. Kenya as a country highly depends on technical skills to achieve The Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. However, this can only be achieved through proper and realistic career counseling information provided by the counseling teachers at secondary school level. According to KCSE results released every year, majority of the candidates score below grade C+ especially in 2016 and 2017 though above D- which is the requirements for entrance for proficiency level for TVET courses. However, majority of students do not join Vocational or Technical Education due to a missing link between the natures of career counseling services offered at secondary school level. Counselors has expectations and premise that majority of the candidates join trainings at university levels thus package their counseling information on the few ignoring other students. The objective behind this study was to examine the final results scored by students and the subject choice at secondary school, various career theories and models that guide career choices formed foundation for the study. The study used a descriptive design where data was collected through past existing data review from KNEC and one Technical Training Institute over a period of four years. Data was analyzed and presented in tables and figures. Findings revealed that majority of the candidates (86.92%) of the KCPE candidates scored less than C+ and had no career information on Vocational and Technical Education. The study recommends reengineering of the career guidance in Kenya education system to involve the Ministry, professionals and Human Resource Management experts.

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Introduction

Kenya is aspired to be a middle-income country by the year 2030 through the country's blue print of The Vision 2030 providing a high quality of life to all its citizens. Included in the Vision is the Social Pillar which outlines the country's education that aims at producing a well trained and skilled labour force at all terminals levels of education that will enable the country achieve its aspirations (UNESCO, 1961: 4). Various sectors envision to power the country include. Agriculture, ICT, Manufacturing/Industry, Education and Finance. In manufacturing the blueprint envisages a newly industrialized country, powered by a high-skilled workforce (GoK, 2005). To get a pool of skilled manpower as envisioned, there has to be world class training and proper and deliberate career guidance given to students. There must be an intentional training available and applicable to the masses. To be industrialized, Aduda (2003) argued that Kenya needs to have a pool of people with vocational and technical skills to work in various sectors of the economy and further observed that currently, career teachers especially at secondary school level have a bias against technical courses because they believe that they are of low value than university courses which promise a higher paying job as well as a higher social status. The study revealed that one would rather be a teacher or a tout than be a carpenter, a plumber or a motor vehicle mechanic.

This is against the expectations of the concluded global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). From the worldwide perspective, there has been an observed positive relationship between the quality and quantity of human capital in terms of skills and knowledge and development and growth in the world economies. Past studies

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and reports by ILO associate mass knowledge and skills to economic growth and development of a country. Mbware (2004) reckon that development of a country depends on the developmental level of its people.

The objective behind the Social Pillar of The Kenya Vision 2030 therefore is to guide the nation in the investing in the people of Kenya in order to be more productive through pursuance of the right skills, careers and professions at various levels. Towards this pillar, the country has made big strides in the education sector by offering Free Primary Education (FPE) since 2003 and Free Secondary Education (FSE) from 2008 with an aim that those students will ferry the country to attainment of improved quality of life for all Kenyans. The transition rate has increased from 48.02% in 2009 to 79.41% in 2015.

This paper is a critical review of the effects of the career counseling services offered at the secondary school level in Kenya. This is because as it has been observed by Aduda (2003) and Government of Kenya (2005), there has been a great discrepancy between the country's expectations and aspiration and the reality on the ground and between the National budgetary allocation on education and the output. Transition rate from primary level to secondary level has been growing exponentially since the introduction of Free Secondary Education (FSE) in 2008 (GoK, 2013), but majority end up scoring grade C and below at KCSE.

The study therefore explores the short comings or biasness introduced by secondary school career counselors or the counseling services based on the fact that majority of the students do not end up pursuing university education (Nyarangi, 2011). Good career counseling should be based on facts and client's potential and other external factors such as career acquisition cost. This fact notwithstanding, the main focus of many counselors is concentrated on the higher achievers ignoring the masses yet a very small percentage end up scoring the minimum university requirements. As noted during selection of subject at Form Two, the students are required to select between sciences and art based subjects, school counselor advice the students to choose "easy" and art based subjects at the expense of sciences especially Physics which is assumed to be difficult for average students. This is done without considering the fact that the science subjects form the foundation for most vocational and technical courses area where the bulk of students belong. This results to wrong choices of subjects where students are encouraged to choose "booster subjects" such as CRE or History which do not prepare them for any future careers based on their final performance. Career guidance should be balanced or skewed towards the majority who end qualifying for vocation and technical education careers. (Gibson and Mitchell, 2008).

A study conducted in Ghana by Ayiah-Mensah (2014) noted that technical and vocational education prepares an individual for self reliance and that this type of educations is among the key essential tools an individual can use to develop him or herself as well as the community. The study argues that for a country whose population growth is faster than the economic growth, technical and vocational education should be the interest of end result for all. This is because it provides educational training for useful employment in mass related areas such as trade, agriculture, industries, homemaking and business which is the foundation through which economic growth and development is based (Republic of Kenya, 2014). Basically, technical and vocational training or courses aimed at strengthening the skills base of an individual for production of goods and services.

The country's human potential can only be unleashed through proper career information provided through career counseling service in the education process. This can best be done at secondary school level since the learners are mature enough to understand career world unlike the primary school. In Kenya, this has been a challenge that has lingered for a long time and has affected students in their career choice later in life as they leave school without proper guidance. The nature of the counseling offered concentrate more on the students who are presumed likely to join university ignoring majority of the students' population. The problem is even compounded by the fact that most of the Vocational and Technical Education offers courses that are science based including physics yet most students failed to select the subject due to biased in career counseling. This paper is an exploration to the effects of the current career counseling base on past records.

In this study, it is aimed to establish the influence of secondary school career counselors on TVET education in Kenya

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Frank Parsons (1951) developed the idea of matching careers to talents, skills and personality. People perform best when they are in jobs best suited to their abilities. Frank Parsons is regarded as the founder of the vocational guidance movement. He developed the talent-matching approach, which was later developed into the Trait and Factor Theory of Occupational Choice. At the centre of Parsons' theory is the concept of matching. an accurate understanding of their individual traits (aptitudes, interests, personal abilities), a knowledge of jobs and the labour market and rational and objective judgment about the relationship between their individual traits, and the labour market.

This three-part theory still governs most current practice. The trait and factor theory operates under the premise that it is possible to measure both individual talents and the attributes required in particular jobs. It also assumes that people may be matched to an occupation that's a good fit. Parsons suggests that when individuals are in jobs best suited to their abilities they perform best and their productivity is highest.

Parsons (1951) maintains that personal counsel is fundamental to the career search. In particular, he notes seven stages for a career counselor to work through with clients: Personal data: create a statement of key facts about the person, remembering to include every

fact that has bearing on the vocational problem. Self-analysis: Self-examination is done in private and under the instruction of the counselor. Every tendency and interest that might impact on the choice of a life work should be recorded. The student's own choice and decision must be based on information and respected. The counselor must bear in mind that the choice of vocation should be made by the client, with the counselor acting just as guide. Outlook on the vocational field: the counselor should be familiar with industrial knowledge such as lists and classifications of industries and vocations, in addition to locations of training and apprenticeships. Induction and advice: a broad-minded attitude coupled with logical and clear reasoning is critical at this stage. General helpfulness: the counselor helps the client to fit into the chosen work, and to reflect on the decision.

Much of Parsons' work still guides career counseling today, though it is not without criticism. Matching assumes a degree of stability within the labour market. However, the reality is that the market's volatility means individuals must be prepared to change and adapt to their circumstances. These theories notwithstanding career counselors in Kenya are not guided by any theory but base their counseling on the premise that all secondary school students will end up in universities thus skewing their information towards that end.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

The country and specifically the Ministry of Education highly depend on career counselors to provide information and guide students with career-related information. They are expected to put a person's potential, attitudes, strengths and weakness in a broad perspective while also considering their personal hobbies and interests, location, job market and educational possibilities (Mbwale, 2004). Through their counseling and teaching abilities, career counselors can additionally support people in gaining a better understanding of what really matters for them personally, how they can plan their careers autonomously, or help them in making tough decisions and getting through times of crisis. However, Ayiah-Mensah (2014) noted that most counselors concentrate on the few who perform well academically. This implies that majority of the students are not exposed to information relevant to their aspirations and potentials (Aduda, 2003). At the subject selection, the assumption is that all will go to university hence select subject without considering student's reality. According to policy makers in many countries, career guidance and counseling forms the bases through which human resource capital can be improved. However due to skewed and bias approach, they have caused death to many through poor guidance in subjects and career selection

The Gap

One of the major challenges associated with career counseling is encouraging participants to actively be engaged in the process. In Kenyan scenario, career counselors take the whole and assume that the students and parents are ignorant on the choices. A study in the UK observed that, 70% of people under 14 have had no careers advice while 45% of people over 14 have had no or very poor/limited advice. Furthermore, it is recognized that the giving of career advice is something that is widely spread through a range of formal and informal roles. In addition to career counselors it is also common for psychologists, teachers, managers, trainers and Human Resources (HR) specialists to give formal support in career choices. Similarly it is also common for people to seek informal support from friends and family around their career choices and to bypass career professionals altogether. Today those who are informed are increasingly relying on career web portals to seek advice on consideration on career choice. It has even become possible to take vocational assessments online.

Research and Methodology

The study was guided by positivist philosophy because it heavily depended on the quantitative data collected from existing records. The research design was descriptive and tried to get interpretations from the data that exist from 2009 to 2017 on KCPE and KCSE exams results and the impact to the economy. A case study of a group of current and ex-students in a village at Mathira constituency, Nyeri County was used and longitudinal data capture was used. Data was summarized in tables and percentages and then presented in figures and chart followed by discussion and interpretation.

Findings and Discussions

Career counseling in Kenya takes place at school and specifically at secondary level. Table 1 indicates the trend from 2009 to 2017 of the transition rate from Primary Level to Secondary Level. The figures indicate the number of candidates who successfully transits from primary level of education to secondary level have been increasing from 48.02% in 2009 to 100% in 2017. This is very positive although those who don't get to secondary school do not get access to career information. For example in 2009, 368, 344 pupils didn't get career information but found their way to the labour market with no formal training or guidance. This translates to 1,459,298 pupils going to waste although with proper guidance they could have joined TVET or National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) programmes.

Table 1: Transitions from Primary to Secondary

Year	No .sat for KCPE	Admitted to F1	%
2009	708,600	340,256	48.02
2010	746,080	360,058	48.26
2011	776,216	416,900	53.71
2012	811,930	489,900	60.34
2013	839,759	521,601	62.11
2014	889,163	566,711	63.74
2015	925,744	735,094	79.41
2016	937,567	792,769	84.54
2017	952, 472	952,472	100
Total	6,635,059	5,175,761	78.00

Source: Ministry of Education

Figure 2: The number of candidates with KCPE certificate

The table indicates that the number of candidates with KCPE certificate that has missed form 1 admission has been declining. This is a very positive direction since it is according to the Government aspirations and dream for the free primary and secondary school. Figure below displays the same information in a figure form.

Table 2: No. sat for KCPE and those who missed Form 1 selection.

Year	No .sat for KCPE	Missed F1	%
2009	708,600	368,344	51.98
2010	746,080	386,022	51.74
2011	776,216	359,316	46.29
2012	811,930	322,030	39.66
2013	839,759	318,138	37.99
2014	889,163	322,452	36.26
2015	925,744	190,650	20.59
2016	937,567	144,798	15.45
2017	952,472	952,492	0
Total	6,635,059	2,411,750	36.35

The figures are presented in the figure below.

Figure 3: Candidate who sat for KCPE and Missed Form 1 admission

The figure 3 above indicates the number of candidates who sat for KCPE and missed form one. It is clear that the transition rate has been on the increase implying that Free Secondary School is bearing fruits. In the year 2015, out of 925,744 candidates, only 190,650 missed form One which translate to 20.59% and in 2017 all the candidates transited to secondary schools. This is very encouraging since majority of the student got access to career counseling services which are offered at secondary school level. Table 2 indicates the number of candidates who sat for KCPE at primary level and transited to secondary school. As noted from the figures, transition rate has been increasing over the years where it has gradually progressed from 48.02 % in 2009 to 100% in 2017. These findings implies that in the year 2009, more than half of the students failed to join secondary school which has a very negative impact in the economy because results to a pool of citizen without skills and training. Within the last nine years 2009 to 2017, a total of **2,411,750** out of **6,635,059** KCPE candidates failed to join secondary school and joined the labour economy with no specialized skill which translates to 36.35%. The productivity and quality of work from this group of citizens is very low due to lack of knowledge and skills therefore hindering the country from attaining her vision. Most of these candidates had not even been prepared to join TVET or NITA programmes for skills development because the career counseling services are concentrated at secondary level.

KCPE and KCSE Results, 2009-2015

Table 3 below indicates the number of candidates who completed KCPE between 2009 and 2015 and followed through the thereby completing KCSE between 2013 and 2015. Results indicate that in 2009, a total of 708 600 candidates sat for KCPE out of which 446, 696 completed secondary school with KCSE in the year 2013. Further analysis of the results indicated that the percentage of those who scored C+ and above was 17.40% and 27.61% of the KCPE and KCSE total candidature levels respectively. This implies that 82.60% or 585,304 of candidates although completed secondary school did not qualify with the minimum C+ to join higher education at university but resulted to furthering their education through vocational or technical education. It is important to note that the government only sponsors a small number of those who score C+ and above implying that the number of candidates legible for pursuing vocational and technical education is higher. The argument is the same for other years of 2010 and 2011 with slight variations.

With critical review of these findings, it is important to critically analyze the career counseling services offered to secondary school students. Of interest are the conditions, nature, and general career information given to students by career counseling teachers at secondary school level. According to reviewed studies by Masinde (2003) and Waudo (2001) Kenya approaches to career guidance is highly skewed and concentrates on a very small percentage of the population. This is because the education system is competition based concentrating on the areas which produce fast results or output but kills the important value of education thus leaving and

negative long lasting results. Nugent and Jones (2005) reckon that majority of the students and school leavers are totally ignored on career information or are provided with the wrong information that is not applicable to them. This results to a very high percentage of citizens with no skills and training at higher levels. It was noted during the release of KCSE 2015 results that only 28.63% of the candidates scored grade C plus (C+) and above. This implies that 71.37% of the candidates did not qualify to join university thereby ended up furthering their trainings in Vocational and Technical Education. Though this is the case but during their four years course the counselors concentrated with the 28.63% perspective and majority of the students were ignored.

Table 3: KCPE and KCSE Results, 2009-2015

Year	KCPE	KCSE	C+ and above	% of C+ at KCSE	% C+ at KCPE	% of C and below
2009	708,600	446,696 (2013)	123,365	27.61	17.40	82.60
2010	746,080	483,630 (2014)	165,776	34.28	22.21	77.79
2011	776,216	522,870 (2015)	149,717	28.63	19.29	80.71
2012	811,930	577,071 (2016)	88,927	15.41	10.95	89.05
2013	839,759	610,501 (2017)	70,073	11.48	8.34	91.66
Total	3,882,585	2,640,768	507,858	19.23	13.08	86.92

Source: Extracted from KNEC: KCSE Results (2013-2015)

Out of **3,882,585** candidates who sat for KCPE between 2009 and 2013, **507,858** scored a grade of C+ and above which translates to 19.67%. Results for 2016 and 2017 were highly affected due to Matiang'i Factor despite the teacher counselors concentrating and aiming at university trainings. The reality is that 86.92% of the candidates had to pursue further education through vocational and technical areas. These results are presented in figure 3 below.

Figure 4: Performance of C+ and above. KCPE, KCSE

Figure 5: Those who sat for KCSE and scored C+ and above

Gikororo Village, Mathira constituency, Nyeri County

The table below presents a group of students and ex-students from a village in Mathira Constituency in Nyeri County. The group started meeting in 2015 to address education and career issues in the village. Although majority had finished KCSE and scored grades that could have enabled them join TVET careers at different levels, they were frustrated in the village doing manual labors. Some had finished form 4 in 2006 but had no information on TVET programmes. With career information and proper guidance, the table

presents the percentages of those who have joined the programmes. These results notwithstanding, according to National Census figures of 2009, central Kenya had the second highest of citizens who transits from secondary to college.

Table 4: Figures for the years between 2015-2017 presented

Year	Present with less than C and below	Facilitated to join TVET programme	%
2015	34	9	26
2016	78	19	24
2017	112	23 (joined or gotten adm letters)	20
Total	224	61	27.23

If these efforts could be replicated in the whole country, a great number of them could be assisted to further their skills and careers and out of 2,640,768 candidates, 719,137 could be assisted across the country which could results to careerization of the masses.

Conclusions

From the data, findings and discussions presented, it can be summarized and concluded that there is a challenge in the way information is given to students at secondary school level by career guidance and counselors. Career information given to the students cannot prepare the kind of citizens that the country require to enable the country achieve the aspired Vision 2030. Instead of students being exposed to the right information, they are given the wrong or no information concerning careers.

There is need to overhaul the students' career services at secondary school level. Career counseling should also be totally overhauled and separated from the other forms of counseling and students guidance be based on their potential and talents. Career professionals should also be engaged by the Ministry of Education to handle the matters of students' career choice. Human Resource management professionals should also be involved to lay a firm background to career life of the citizens.

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