

Factors Influencing Students' Career Choices in Public Secondary School in Manga Sub County, Nyamira County- Kenya

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Abstract: The rapid increase in educated unemployment over the recent past years coupled with daily advertisements of diverse job opportunities in the labor market indicated that there was a mismatch between what the educational institutions were training and the labor market needs. Little attention has been paid to student's career guidance. Students make ignorant career choices by owing it to themselves to find out what career opportunities exist and those that are compatible to their talents, interests and academic ability. This study set out to find out the factors influencing student's career choices at secondary school level in Manga Sub County, Nyamira County. The objectives of the study were; to determine influence of socio-economic factors, to analyze influence of home-based factors and to find out school-based factors on students' career choices. The study was based on the theory of human capital theory. Descriptive survey method was adopted. The study targeted population involves 16 principals, 284 TSC teachers, 101 form four students leaders and 16 PTA chair persons. Saturated sampling was employed to come up with a sample of 16 principals, 284 TSC teachers, 101 student leaders and 16 PTA chair persons. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students while interviews were ideal for collecting data from principals and PTA chair persons. Statistical analysis was done to generate frequencies and percentages in analyzing quantitative data while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. The study revealed that students made ignorant career choices due to inadequate career guidance. Majority of the teachers were not trained to handle careers neither were there adequate career guidance sessions in schools. Parental, peers and sibling influence also affected students as they made their career choice. Possible measures suggested included; students should be guided through their subjected choices to be in line with their career expectations. Parents, siblings and other members of the community should be advised on how to talk to students about their subject interest and abilities. The number of career guidance sessions could be increased. Conclusively, a further diagnostic study of the problem involving a large sample and a cross section of all categories of secondary schools was recommended by the researcher to help in minimizing problems of career choices in secondary school.

Keywords: career choices, Career guidance, public secondary schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many students in Kenya and the world as a whole go through school with wrong career notions. The 'celebrity jobs' of Engineering, Law, Architecture, Medicine and Bachelor of Commerce were every student's dream (Muriaki, 2006). According to Muriaki (2006), "Career is a job that allows one to go through self-discovery, expression and assertion." The Ministry of Education in Kenya first introduced career guidance in schools in 1971 by establishing a section within the ministry and publishing a career handbook. Although the ministry realized that career guidance was not adequate and introduced it within the schools Departments of Guidance and counseling, there was no systematic growth of expansion of services (CHE, 2005).

The need for career guidance in schools had continued to be expressed at various policy levels. In the Development Plan (1979 – 1983) it was agreed that career guidance should form parts of curriculum at the teacher training colleges and universities. However, there was concern that there was no adequate material to be covered.

The state of joblessness in the country had resulted in both trained and untrained scrambling for whatever jobs they could land their hands-on. The slow economic growth had not been able to absorb those seeking employment (CHE, 2005). This had been accelerated by the labor market imperfection that manifested itself in the form of career information breakdown, which particularly affected students who graduated. Carnoy (2007) said that a better match between graduates of different levels and sectors of educational system and the job opportunities in the labor market had always been the major preoccupation of educational planning. Career guidance had a role to play in providing direction to the youth at the secondary school level. Guiding the youth in appropriate subject choices leading to their engagement in a relevant career path (Donnelly et al, 2002)

Gichohi (2005) asserts that, “There had never been a serious effort in Kenya to help students make right career choices. She added that in most cases the students are entirely left on their own”. They groped in the dark and when they made choices, they enrolled for studies they knew little or nothing about. Even students in schools, which had career teachers, things were not much different, because teachers were not trained and thus not skilled enough to adequately guide them.

The scenario is not better; the students face problems in their optional subject choices as they join form three. Form four graduates also spend fortune time in years before enrolling for any course of study. Out of the 41.4% students who joined the university in 2012/2013 academic year, only 39% were selected by their first choice, 36.6% had to revise their application for degree courses and 24.4% were selected by their second choice. (CHE, 2013)

Table I: JAB Admissions 2013/2014 “Olereko” Secondary School.

1 st Choice	2 nd Choice	After Revision
39%	24.4%	36.6%

Source: Principal Olereko Secondary School, JAB Admissions 2013/2014

Although data on the other 58.6% of the other students who graduated that year from the same school 41.4% of the students who were to join the university were a representative sample of the scenario in the school. Manga Sub County has 16 secondary schools. Twelve of them are mixed schools, three are Girls schools and one is a Boys school. Parents are also to blame because some of them frequently visit school to influence their children’s subject choices. This make students to pursue subjects they do not like in school, creating stress in them (Muriakii, 2006).

Muriakii (2006) asserts that; the greatest challenge in students’ career choices in many schools is lack of exposure for teacher students. Students make ignorant career decisions based on how far the teachers guide them out of the career information supplied from institutions of higher learning. In essence, therefore students owe it to themselves to find out what career opportunities exist and those that are compatible to their talents, interests and academic ability.

Obonyo (1994) in his study on educational and career expectations of girls in Khwisero District pointed out that career expectations of adolescents were by no means nurtured in a vacuum. They were part and parcel of society’s tailored perceptions. Students’ aspirations can be lowered or raised by discouraging or encouraging the students in a given career or pursuit. He found out that careers that students wish to pursue after secondary school education in order of preference included; Nursing., Medicine, Teaching, Law, Accountancy, Secretarial, Air hostess among others. The students also said they wished to pursue such careers because of parental pressure, financial considerations and egotistic reasons among others.

Many students in Kenya and the world as a whole go through school with wrong career notions. According to Jones, (2007) at teenage years and early 20’s, a person’s personality and abilities are developing with values, abilities, skills and talents emerging. Frequently, the person doesn’t know him or herself well enough to make a specific career choice. A young person could only aspire for careers that they viewed as available and attainable (CHE, 2005). For example in a country without an outer space program young person whose career preference was to be an astronaut was likely to give

up and aspire for alternatives that were available. The study pointed out that students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups had humble aspirations.

Ragna (2001) in her study on education and training and choice of occupation and career in (Nyeri) Kenya, concluded that career aspirations were dictated by socio-economic and cultural background of the students. Students from families where there was a tradition for further education, tended to choose the footsteps of their elder brothers and sisters. Tsuma (2006), on his study on Girls career preferences in Kenya found out that by the onset of adolescence, girls were already biased against technical and physical art's careers. Kibera (2003) in his study in Kiambu, Kajiado, and Machakos Districts on career aspirations and expectations of secondary school students pointed out that career aspirations and expectations are not merely outcomes of curriculum studied, rather they were a product of a variety of factors including school quality (quality of staff, equipment, workshops and school practices), gender composition of students in schools, age of the student, geographical/ community environment.

Vicent (2004) in a career guidance seminar at Tereni Mixed Secondary School indicates that due to ignorance students are likely to end up in a career not because that was what was ideal for them, but because they were not aware of any other options. To support the more relevant and exciting the information available on a given career the more likely the students were to choose that career because they were impressed and even inspired by comfort and certainty of an informed decision. Gichohi (2005) said that there had never been serious efforts to help students make right career choices. Many schools depended on the 1989 career information handbook, whose information had become obsolete.

Jones (2011) argued that parents affected the level of education or training that their children achieved, the knowledge they had about work and different occupations, the beliefs and attitudes they had about work and the job skills they learned. Some of the ways they did this was by; the attitudes and behavior they rewarded and punished approved or disapproved of. The expectations they had for their children's education and career. The examples they were setting for their children. The influence they exerted on who was around them—the children and adults who were to become their children's 'significant others'. The opportunities they offered their children to learn and develop and the kind of parent-child relationship they developed. In the researcher's opinion this was not bad but may go against the abilities and propensities of the student. Kilonzo (2010) in his study on student's career awareness found out that there was a significant relationship between father's education and educational aspirations for the students.

Raby & Walford (2011) in their study on career-related attitudes and their determinants in France revealed that home environment was the dominant source of career attitudes; parents' aspirations for their children were high. They also found out that students did not relate the world of school with future prospects. They saw the school as irrelevant to future jobs. Brembeck (2006) argued that student level of educational aspiration was positively related to peer-group membership. According to him peer group membership with a student with high career expectation influenced them to be inspired for certain careers. Jones (2012) supports peer group influence was an important factor in influencing students' career choice.

Gichohi (2005), identifies that, even students in schools, which had career teachers, things were not much different, because teachers were not trained and thus not skilled enough to adequately guide them. The study revealed that untrained teachers on matters of career guidance were of least help to students. Obonyo (2004) pointed out that teachers did not create career awareness because they assumed that their role was to teach and not to create career awareness. He argued that, teachers needed to be in-serviced on career guidance and educational aspirations, which in turn was to be used to assist students.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Determine the influence of socio-economic factors on student's career choice in public secondary schools in Manga Sub County, Nyamira County.
- ii. Analyze the influence of home-based factors on students' career choices in public secondary schools in Manga Sub County, Nyamira County.

iii. Establish the influence of school-based factors on students’ career choices in public secondary schools in Manga Sub County, Nyamira County.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey design to investigate the factors affecting students’ career choice at secondary school level.

Study Population:

The study targeted population involves 16 principals who involved in leadership and school management, 284 TSC teachers who are directly concerned with students’ affairs, 101 students leaders to represent other students’ view and 16 PTA chair persons to represent parents’ issues and an interlink to school management.

Sampling and Sample Size:

Saturated sampling was employed to come up with a sample of 16 principals, 284 TSC teachers, 101 student leaders and 16 PTA chair persons. The choice of participants was appropriate for this research credibility. The insider knowledge of teachers and the experience of students of the target schools will help check, corroborate and enrich the data obtained from other participants. The contribution of parents (PTA) gave the research insights from the local community in respect of the research topic.

Conceptual Framework:

In the study socio-economic factors such as students’ career expectations was conceptualized to be influenced by home-based factors like parents and peer group pressure as students make their career choices. In the study career guidance matched with career information from the labor market would influence students’ career choices. Then through formal education and training the students will discover their career paths leading to making informed career choices. The conceptual frame work correlated the factors influencing students’ career choice among secondary schools based on the socio-economic factors, including the initial career information and student career expectations as guided by expected future monetary and non-monetary rewards influenced the initial career aspirations of the students. School-based factors such as career guidance, adequate trained teachers and enough career guidance sessions when matched with Home-based factors like parents and peer/siblings advice coupled with proper formal education and training would help students make informed career choices.

III. RESULTS

The results of the study obtained from data collected by using questionnaires and interview schedules from respondents were presented and analysed based on the study objective and guided by their related research question.

Socio-Economic Factors influence on students’ career choices:

According to data collected, respondents were asked to state their preferred careers and responses presented in Table I

Table II: Students Preferred Career

Scientific skilled	45.1%
ART’S skilled	35.4%
Technical skilled	19.5%
Farming	-
Unskilled job	-
Total	100%

From the table II above indicate that no student was willing to take up farming or unskilled job. According to the analyzed data teachers viewed their students’ aspiration for future careers as low. The table below explained this.

Table III: Teachers' perceptions on students career choice

Teachers ratings	No	%
Very high	0	-
High	6	37.5%
Low	10	62.5%
Very low	0	-
Total	16	100%

From table III above, majority 62.5% of the teachers viewed their student's aspiration for career as low, and a few (37.5%) viewed the aspiration for career as high. The implication of the socio-economic factors is that; students' career guidance was significant in helping students to make informed career choices at secondary school level, there was inadequate attention paid to help students. One of the shortfalls that necessitated the study was the discrepancy that was noticed from the findings between the subjects that students liked and their proposed career choices. This showed that students were not informed about the requirements in various career fields. Secondly, besides the students' inadequacy in career aspiration, teachers had a low opinion of students' career awareness. Majority had not seen a career handbook and their teachers were not trained to handle careers. In addition there were inadequate career guidance sessions which made that the students had insufficient career information.

Home-Based Factors:

Concerning parental influence, Parent's educational level and occupations were respondents as significant in influencing students' career choices. From the analyzed data a majority of the parents had their education up to primary and secondary level as presented in the Table IV.

Table IV: Parents level of education

	Mother %	Father %
No schooling	11	8.5
Primary	36.6	22
Secondary	36.6	43.9
Certificate	2.4	4.9
Diploma	4.9	6.1
University	8.5	14.6
Total	100%	100%

From the table above, majority of the respondents' fathers 43.9% had secondary education compared to the mothers 36.6%. Secondary education and above was significant because it could help the parents to influence their children's career choice because of the experience they had.

Table V: Parents' encouragement on career choice

	Mother %	Father %
Scientific skilled	51.2	46.34
Art based	36.6	34.15
Technical	12.2	19.51
Farming	-	-
Unskilled/ manuals	-	-
Others	-	-
Total	100%	100%

The table above reveals that, majority of the parents were farmers they encouraged their children to take up professional careers. 51.2% and 46.34% of the respondents were encouraged by their mothers and fathers respectively to take up scientific skilled jobs leading to white collar professions.

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Table VI: Students subject interest and parental influence

	Mother	Father	Students interest
Arts	51.2	46.34	41.5
ARTS	36.6	34.15	52.2
Technical	12.2	19.51	6.1
Undecided	-	-	1.2
Total	100%	100%	100%

A comparison of students' subject interest and parental encouragement to take up a career indicated a conflict in interest. Whereas, 52.2% of the students were interested in taking up Art's subjects, 36.6% and 34.15% were the percentage interest of mothers and fathers respectively to take up Art's oriented jobs. When 41.5% of the respondents were interested in Arts 51.2% and 46.34% of the respondents' mothers and fathers respectively wanted their children to take up art's which was high expectation from parents above their children's ability in art's. The conflict in students' subject interest and their parents' encouragement to take up a particular career probably caused the indecisiveness in their career choice.

Peer and Siblings Influence, depending on the analyzed data there was a positive. Peer and siblings influence in as far as students' career choice was concerned. This is indicated on the table below on the next page.

Table VII: Peer and Siblings encouragement on Career Choice.

	Peer % encouragement	Siblings% encouragement
Yes	85.4%	92.7%
No	14.6%	7.3%
Total	100%	100%

According to the analyzed data 85.4% of the respondents interviewed indicated that they were influenced by their peer group members to choose certain careers. A majority of the students interviewed 92.7% said that they were encouraged by their brothers and sisters to take up a career after school. A large number of respondents indicated that their sisters and brothers had not undergone any training after secondary school. The table below shows that about 37.8% and 42.7% of sisters and brothers of the interviewed students respectively had not undergone any training after secondary school.

Table VIII: Siblings training after secondary school percent

Type of course	Sisters	Brothers
None	37.8%	42.7%
Science based	8.53%	9.8%
Art based	15.9%	14.6%
Technical	19.5%	19.5%
Unskilled/ manual	7.3%	4.9%
Business	2.44%	1.2%
Total	100%	100%

This scenario indicated that majority of the brothers and sisters were encouraging their siblings to take up careers that they were not very much conversant with. In support of the findings a majority of the sisters and brothers were not familiar with different career opportunities in the labour market.

Many siblings of the respondents encouraged their brothers and sisters to take up scientific and Art's oriented jobs 39.02% and 32.93% respectively. Although this was not in line with their career awareness it showed that they encouraged their young sisters and brothers to take up white-collar jobs. The table below presents the findings.

Table IX: Siblings' career choice for their sisters / brothers percent.

Type	Percentage choice
Science Subjects	39.02%
Art Subjects	32.93%
Technical Subjects	19.51%
Farming	-
Unskilled/ manual	-
Business	7.32%
Others	1.22%
Total	100%

This showed that, there was a positive relationship between siblings' encouragement to take up a career for the respondents especially to take scientific, ART'S and Technical skilled jobs with the students' subjects' interests. Majority of the peer-group members encouraged the interviewed students to take up scientific skilled, Art's skilled and technical skilled jobs. 48.8%, 28.1% and 15.9% respectively. The implication concerning the Home-based factors is that; the conflict between the subjects' students liked and their parents, siblings and peer group members encouragement to take up a career which was not in line with the interest of the students perhaps caused the indecisiveness in their career choices.

School- Based Factors:

Career Guidance sessions, majority of the respondents {73.2% } indicated that they had career guidance sessions in their schools. The table below shows the extent of presence of career guidance sessions.

Table X: Presence of Career Guidance Sessions in Schools.

Presence of career guidance sessions	%
Yes	73.2%
No	26.8%
Total	100%

However, the frequency of the career guidance sessions was not adequate. According to the analyzed data 25.6%, 40.2% and 30.5% indicated that they had no career guidance session, had it once per year and once per term respectively. This showed that although there was career guidance sessions the frequency was not adequate enough to guide the students effectively. The table below shows the frequency of career guidance sessions.

Table XI: Frequency of career guidance session

Frequency	Percentage (%)
Once per week	-
Once per month	3.7
Once per term	30.5
Once per year	40.2
None	25.6

Table XII: Teaching experience and length of stay in one school.

	Teaching experiences %	Stay in one school %
>5	43.75	50
6 – 10	37.5	37.5
11 – 15	12.5	6.25
<16	6.25	6.25

Career guidance teachers, according to the analyzed data a majority 93.75% of the teachers indicated that there were no teachers trained to handle careers in their schools. Only 6.25% said they had one teacher trained to handle careers. The table on the next page is a summary of the findings.

Table XIII: Number of teachers trained to handle careers.

Number of teachers	Percentage
None	93.75
One	6.25
Two	-
Three	-
Others specify	-
Total	100

From the table above, majority of the respondents 75.6% indicated that they had career guidance teacher and only 24.4% had no career guidance teachers. With only 6.25% of the interviewed teachers indicating that they had one teacher trained to handle careers the probability of the careers the probability of the career guidance teachers that the students indicated they had not having been trained to handle careers was high. The figure on the next page shows the summary of the findings.

IV. DISCUSSION

Despite the importance attached to guiding students on career choice, students continued to make ignorant career choices because students' career guidance had not been given the attention it deserved. Therefore, students had not made a better match between subject and / or career choice and the needs in the labor market. The purpose of the study was to analyze the factors influencing students' career choice at secondary school level with an aim of proposing policy options that were to help alleviate the indecisiveness of career choices among secondary school students. From the analyzed data it was evident that there was career choice indecisiveness among the students. The study revealed several factors, which were giving, rise to career choice indecisiveness among secondary school students.

According to the analyzed data there was no serious problem on students' career expectation discrepancy between their expected career choice and their preferred subjects indicating elements of career indecisiveness. While 45.1% were to take up scientific careers only 41.5% had an interest in art's subjects. There were 35.4% who would take up Art's oriented jobs but majorities 51.2% were interested in Art's subjects. Therefore, despite the fact that the general figure was that students were aware of what they would do after school, this was not coherent with the subjects they liked in school.

According to the findings teachers viewed their student aspiration for careers as low. A majority 62.5% viewed their students' aspiration for careers as low and a few 37.5% as high. Asked to comment on their opinion, they said that an increase in career guidance sessions and professional career guidance, resource persons was necessary to improve students' career awareness. However, this had no significant relationship with the students' aspiration for careers because the students seemed to be aware of their future careers.

Some respondents noted that they had seen a career handbook in their schools. However, more than half of the respondents 57.3% had indicated that they had not seen any career handbooks in their schools. Majority of the teachers 75% had a low opinion of their students' career awareness. This was associated with inadequate career handbooks, insufficient resource persons and failure to train teachers to handle careers. Majority of the respondents interviewed 93.75% indicated that teachers were not trained to handle careers in schools. Only 6.25% indicated that they had one teacher in their school that was trained to handle careers. From the analyzed data, a majority of the parents had their education up to primary and secondary levels. The findings revealed that many parents attained primary 56.7% and secondary 32.1 % education.

Even though many of the parents were farmers and had low basic education they encouraged their children to take up professional careers 51.2 % of the respondents indicated that their mothers encouraged them to take up scientific jobs. 46.34 % of the respondents indicated that their fathers encouraged them to take up scientific skilled jobs. Although there was a strong relationship between the students' subjects' interest and their parental encouragement to take up scientific

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and Art's skilled jobs more students liked Art's subjects 52.2% compared to their parents' encouragement of 36.6% and 34.5 % for mothers and fathers respectively. Although, a large number of the sisters and brothers had not got training after school many of the peer members and siblings encouraged the respondents to take up a career after school 85.4% and 92.7% respectively. This showed that they encouraged the respondents to take up a career after school 85.4% and 92.7% respectively. This showed that they encouraged the respondents to take up careers that they were not conversant with the siblings further encouraged the respondents to take up careers such as scientific skilled. The peer-group members preferred the respondents to take up careers in the order scientific skilled 48.8%, Art's skilled 28.1% and technical skilled 15.9%. Majority of the respondents preferred Art's subjects 52.2% compared to the wishes of their peers who preferred Art's skilled jobs with only 28.1%. This might have brought confusion when the respondents were to finally make their career choices.

Asked to indicate how often career guidance sessions were held in their schools 75% of the teachers said the sessions were held once per term. Although 73.2% of the students said they had career guidance sessions in their schools, they were not adequate to help guide the students. According to the analyzed data many of the respondents 93.75% said there were no trained teachers to handle career. Therefore, although 75.6% of the respondents said that they had career guidance teachers in their schools they were of very little help to the students in as far as career guidance was concerned.

V. CONCLUSION

This study established some factors, which were contributing towards students' career choice indecisiveness among secondary schools. The study revealed that students made ignorant career choices, which were not compatible to their talents, interests and academic ability. This was proved by the disagreement between their career expectation, their interest in subjects and parents, siblings and peer members encouragement to take up careers, which were not in line with their interest. Teachers and students were not conversant with the various types of careers that existed. Besides the inadequate training of the teachers, there were few career guidance sessions and in some schools none was organized. Even though a few had access to career handbooks, the handbooks they had seen were outdated and obsolete. This proved that very little if any career information was available in the schools.

This study identified that teachers ought to be trained to handle careers as the ministry of education updates and distributes career choice materials for use in schools early enough. Increase the frequency of career guidance sessions and hire professional career counselors to help guide students in schools. This study highlights some factors contributing to students' career choice indecisiveness and gives respondents views in alleviating or curbing issues related to students' career choices

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of this study the following recommendations were important for adoption in order to improve students' career choice at secondary school level. The study recommends that all education stakeholders should work towards providing career guidance to students early in life by increasing the number of career guidance sessions in schools and inviting qualified career guidance counselors as guest speakers.

Principals are advised to annually obtain revised career handbook that could help both teachers and students in making informed career choices. Occasionally, especially during parents' days, the parents, siblings and other members of the community could be advised on how to talk to their children about their subjects' interest and abilities. This could help them to encourage the students on right career paths.

Teachers and others concern with students welfare need to be well equipped to facilitate change of attitude towards their students' career aspiration and choices so as to guide them appropriately in make informed career choice.

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