

EFFECT OF CAREER GUIDANCE ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' READINESS TO MAKE CAREER CHOICES: A CASE OF SELECTED PRIVATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KENYA.

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ABSTRACT

This study reviewed career guidance services offered to students from a private university in Kenya and examined the effect of the program on the students' readiness to make career choices. Employing a cross sectional descriptive survey design, the factorial ANOVA failed to reveal a statistically significant effect of career guidance on students' readiness to make career choices $F(2, 152) = 0.089$, $MSe = 364.88$, $p = .915$, $\eta p^2 = 0.001$ $\alpha = .05$. There was no statistically significant main effect of career training, provision of career information services and career counselling, thus, providing insufficient evidence to confirm that career guidance services offered to the students had an effect on readiness to make career choices. Therefore, the readiness to make career choices for these university students could have been as a result of other intrinsic or external factors that included minimal influence from the career guidance services offered at the institution.

Key Words: Career Guidance, Higher Education, Career Training, Career Counselling, Career Information, Career Choices.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A main challenge for career guidance practitioners in higher education is the need for effective career guidance services that equip students with relevant career management skills for the task of career decision making. Additionally, career guidance theories should reflect the local context, yielding need-specific career guidance policies and structures for the local labour market (Sultana & Watts, 2008).

The lack of readiness of students to make career choices due to ineffective career guidance is demonstrated by the frequent course and program changes, retention problems and increased dropout rate of university students (Kunnen, 2013). This has financial and academic planning implications on university administration as well as serious ramifications on student lives. A study by Leach and Patall (2013) adds that a low level of decidedness on a career path, results in low

motivation, and avoidance behaviours which affect the academic performance and career decision making of young people. An earlier study carried out by Khamadi, Bowen, and Oladipo (2011) noted that low career maturity levels among students was signalled by lack of preparedness for career decision making. Students selected courses and careers preferred by parents and close associations rather than from their knowledge of self, of occupations and their confidence to integrate the two.

It is argued that for a student to be truly ready to make career choices there must be a positive interplay between their career planning, career exploration, knowledge of the world of work, knowledge of occupations and career decision making. Effective interventions such as career training, provision of career guidance materials and career counselling are expected to equip students for career decision making (Sultana & Watts, 2008).

Literature reviewed showed that, career guidance services in higher education are limited in scale, quality and are not well equipped to handle the challenges brought about by increased access to tertiary education. Such is the case in Australia, Korea and many of the countries with membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2004). This study therefore sought to establish the effect of career guidance on the readiness of students to make career choice.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

The following research hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁: Career training has no significant effect on students' readiness to make career choices.

H₀₂: Provision of career information material has no significant effect on the readiness of university students to make career choices.

H₀₃: Career counselling has no significant effect on the readiness of university students to make career choices.

H₀₄: Family socio economic background of the student did not interact to influence the overall effect of career guidance.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Cognitive Information Processing

Cognitive information-processing (CIP) theory contends that for there to be effective career problem solving and decision making, there must be sound decision making in the 3 domains of pyramid of information processing which include Knowledge Domain; Decision-Making Skills Domain and Executive Processing Domain. These domains enable the control and sequencing of career problem solving (Sampson, Peterson, Reardon & Lenz, 2011) which eventually leads to readiness to make career decisions.

According to this theory therefore, the functioning in each domain can be modified by differentiated learning and career relevant experiences in career guidance (career training and education, provision of career information and career counselling) that can be arranged to address career problem solving in each domain. Possible mediating factors such as family socio-economic background should be taken into account when fashioning relevant career guidance programs. It also encourages

experiential learning relevant for the exploration stage according to Super's theory of career development (Krumboltz, 2009).

1.3.2 Super's Theory of Vocational Choice

Super's theory describes career decision making as a developmental process into career maturity which spans an individual's lifetime and is divided into five stages; growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. Super believed that the degree of individuals' success in their career development depends partly on how well they are able to identify and implement their career self-concept and the extent to which they are able to display career maturity. It is believed that one's personality, abilities, interests, experiences and values influences their career self-concept (Zunker, 2002).

Development of career maturity and self- concept can be influenced by environmental factors which include career guidance interventions such as career training, provision of career information and career counselling. The concept of career maturity is used to describe the readiness of an individual to make informed career decisions that are age appropriate in addition to dealing with vocational tasks expected for each stage (Skorikov, 2007).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In spite of limitations in career guidance services in higher education, many countries globally are in agreement on the importance of career guidance to all age groups (Lairio & Penttinen, 2006; Leung, 2008; Watts & Sultana, 2004). Literature reviewed shows that career guidance has had a positive impact on students particularly when the career guidance is comprehensive (Folsom, Reardon & Lee, 2005). It can increase the efficiency of education programs by identifying learning needs, and helping students in identifying appropriate courses, expand their career choices and challenge them to break personal limits (ILO, 2006). Additionally career guidance is linked to increased readiness of students to make career choices by increasing their ability to plan their careers and make successful transition into the labour market (Kunnen, 2013; Sun & Yuen, 2012; Sultana & Watts, 2008).

Highly structured and organized activities suggest that career guidance is greatly developed in high income countries. This is unlike in the Middle East, in North Africa and in many developing countries (Watts & Sultana, 2004). Additionally, there is scant literature on the same from these areas and in Kenya (MoEST, 2005) when compared to Western countries. In Kenya, like in many other developing countries and institutions where resources are scarce, these programs are offered under varying contexts (Dabula & Makura, 2013). Thus the trend is to seek evidence to support the impact of career guidance, in order for resources to be channelled to career guidance programs amidst competing interests that seem more urgent.

Adding on to this problem is the weakness in career guidance policies and structure for implementing career guidance programs in Kenya (Ibrahim, Aloka, Wambiya and Raburu, 2014; Khamadi, Bowen and Oladipo, 2011; Kimiti & Mwova, 2012). It is therefore evident that career guidance services are yet to take a prominent place in tertiary education when compared to more

developed countries (Watts & Sultana, 2004). No wonder the MoEST, (2005) acknowledges that one of the challenges faced by Kenya is the mismatch of industry demands and students' career identity, career expectations and skills. While Kenya has made progress in provision of career guidance, according to Ombamba, Keraro, Sindabi and Asienyo, (2014) the direction of movement has been to give secondary school students information on the courses offered in tertiary institutions with little support on how to match their skills, interests and values to the courses and a specific career path. Therefore, they get to university without a clear career development plan.

Together with the urgent need to develop relevant career guidance programs in higher education, government policy and legislation should be developed to allow for the progression of career guidance as a major force in development of human resource (Bernes, Bardick & Orr, 2006) as is being done elsewhere (Pillay, Toit & Mayer, 2014). Without this, it can be expected that career guidance programs in higher education will be structured in accordance to the priorities of each institution. There is need also to contextualise these services to the African education setting; thus, the need to study the varying significance of the effects of various interventions used in career guidance (Bozgeyikli, Eroglu, Harmucu, 2009; Durosaro & Adebanye, 2012).

The present study sought to address this by using data from students from a private university within 18 and 24 years age range to elicit information on the effect of career guidance on the readiness to make career choice. The study considered the influence of family socio- economic background on the relationship between career guidance and readiness to make career choices. With increased research in this area in Africa, practitioners and education administrators can justify the need for improved career guidance programs and services especially in Africa where other more urgent needs compete for resources.

3.0 METHODS

The study was conducted using a cross sectional descriptive survey design. Because of the one off occurrence, the study did not infer causality (Creswell, 2009) but generated hypotheses that could be used for future research.

3. 1 Sampling and Data Collection Tool

A sample of 266, calculated using the formula developed by Cochran (1963) as cited by Singh and Masaku (2014) was selected from a total of 862 final year male and female students. Stratified sampling was used to obtain a sample of 118 students from one campus and another 148 from a different campus. The sample in each stratum was then selected by simple random sampling using a computer table of random sampling. In order to address construct validity, the questionnaire was divided into sections of major domains providing a relevant theoretical base of each variable as identified through literature review. Internal validity was addressed by pre-testing the questionnaire and an alpha coefficient of 0.67 was considered sufficient in this study.

3. 2 Data Analysis

The filled questionnaires were coded and quantitatively analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Testing of hypotheses was done using factorial analysis of variance with the effect size for

variable interaction computed using η^2 . Factorial ANOVA was selected because it allows for the testing of the combined effects of two or more independent variables at the same time and allowing for the assessment of interaction effects; making this more efficient than several single factor testing (Cardinal & Aitken, 2013).

The response rate for the questionnaires was 76 percent. The quantitative analysis was done using SPSS version 20. The anticipated intervening effect of socio-economic status was statistically controlled for by including it as a factor in the factorial ANOVA, thereby testing its main effect as well as its interaction with other levels of the other factors.

3.2.1 Assumptions of the Factorial ANOVA

The study was designed to enable random sampling of data and independence of sampling units from each other, from the population of interests. Data was deemed reliable since the measurement instrument had yielded a total item reliability coefficient of Alpha 0.090 which is considered high (Oluwatayo, 2012). The dependent variable, was measured at the interval scale satisfying the assumption that the dependent variable should be measured at a continuous measurement scale. The variable was measured using Likert scale, which has been considered by many scholars as an interval measurement level (Munshi, 2014; Norman, 2010). Additionally the three independent variables were each divided into different categorically independent groups of low, medium and high, each showing a different measurement for participants who were measured only once for each variable.

A visual test of normality using Normal Q-Q plots and Box plots was used to approximate normality. The requirement that the error variance should be equal was tested using the Levene's Test of Equality of error. If the test is not significant at a p-value greater or equal to 0.05 then the assumption of homogeneity of variance will not have been violated. The variances were equal, readiness to make career choice ($p = 0.115$), career training ($p = 0.581$), provision of career information services ($p = 0.646$), and career counselling ($p = 0.135$).

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

A factorial ANOVA was used to establish the effect of career guidance interventions (career training, provision of career information and career counselling) on students' readiness to make career decisions. The interaction effect for each combination of the factors of career guidance services in the various levels was also tested. The main effect of career training yielded an F ratio of $F(2, 152) = 0.579$, $p = .562$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$, $\alpha = .05$, indicating that the main effect was not significant. The ANOVA failed to reveal a main effect of provision of career information services, $F(2, 152) = 0.389$, $p = .678$, $\eta^2 = 0.005$, $\alpha = .05$. This implies that there was no sufficient evidence to confirm that there was an effect of provision of career information services on students' readiness to make career choices. The ANOVA failed to show a main effect of career counselling, $F(2, 152) = 0.555$, $p = .575$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$, $\alpha = .05$. The anticipated intervening effect was controlled for statistically by including it as an independent variable in the factorial ANOVA design. The ANOVA failed to reveal a main effect of socio-economic background, $F(2, 152) = 2.913$, $p = .057$, $\eta^2 = 0.037$, $\alpha = .05$. The ANOVA did not reveal an interaction of career training, provision of career

information services, career counselling and socio-economic background $F(1, 152) = 0.133, p = .716, \eta p^2 = 0.001 \alpha = .05$.

The four-way between subject analysis of variance (ANOVA) failed to reveal an interaction of career training, provision of career information service and career counselling $F(2, 152) = 0.089, MSe = 364.88, p = .915, \eta p^2 = 0.001 \alpha = .05$. The interaction of career counselling and career training was not significant $F(3, 152) = 0.991, p = .399, \eta p^2 = 0.019 \alpha = .05$. Interaction of other factors of career counselling and career information service yielded an F ratio of $F(4, 152) = 1.180, p = .322, \eta p^2 = 0.030 \alpha = .05$, career training and career information services of $F(3, 152) = 0.655, p = .581, \eta p^2 = 0.013 \alpha = .05$, all signifying a non-significant interaction effect. There was no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

The interaction of socio-economic background of the respondents and the three independent variables was also tested. This ANOVA did not reveal an interaction of career training and family socio-economic background, $F(4, 152) = 1.299, p = .273, \eta p^2 = 0.033 \alpha = .05$. Provision of career information services and family socio-economic background also did not reveal an interaction $F(4, 152) = 0.87, p = .986, \eta p^2 = 0.002 \alpha = .05$. Additionally there was no evidence of an interaction of career counselling and family socio-economic background, $F(3, 152) = 2.010, p = .115, \eta p^2 = 0.038 \alpha = .05$. Further, the interaction of career counselling, career training and family socio-economic background was not significant $F(4, 152) = 0.412, p = .800, \eta p^2 = 0.011 \alpha = .05$. Similarly, the interaction of career counselling, provision of career information services and family socio-economic background was not significant $F(2, 152) = 0.109, p = .897, \eta p^2 = 0.001 \alpha = .05$. Finally, the interaction of career training, provision of career information services and family socio-economic background was also not significant $F(4, 152) = 0.243, p = .913, \eta p^2 = 0.006 \alpha = .05$.

4.0 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The factorial ANOVA failed to reveal a statistically significant effect of career guidance on students' readiness to make career choices $F(2, 152) = 0.089, MSe = 364.88, p = .915, \eta p^2 = 0.001 \alpha = .05$. There was no statistically significant main effect of career training, provision of career information services and career counselling, thus, providing insufficient evidence to confirm that career guidance services offered to the students had an effect on readiness to make career choices. Therefore, the readiness to make career choices for these university students had minimal influence from the career guidance services offered at the institution. Similar results have been posted by various studies (Lugulu & Kipkoech, 2011; Mtemeri & Zirima, 2013; Ombaba, Keraro, Sindabi & Asienyo, 2014)

On the contrary, other studies carried out where there were established career guidance programmes with systematically arranged activities that included career decision making, career exploration, career maturity and career self-efficacy have shown more positive effects (Hirschi & Lage, 2008; Perdrix, Stauffer, Masdonati, Massoudi & Rossier, 2012; Roy, Banerjee, Sathian & Baboo 2013).

The study demonstrated that a large majority of the students had a low exposure to career guidance services. Perhaps this stems from the quality of career guidance services offered in the institution and the function of career guidance as is perceived by the students. It would have been expected that by their final year, students should have interacted greatly with career guidance services.

Moreover majority of the respondents 89.6 percent were very confident of their readiness to make career decisions while a minority of 10.4 percent rated themselves as only slightly ready to make career choices. These findings are important because they suggest that career guidance services offered in this context may not have been as established and sophisticated when compared to those in other more developed countries, or they have not been structured and tailored to meet the individual needs of university students.

More developed countries have defined structures that are responsible for the development of career guidance. These include coordination of all career guidance service by a central body and oversight by a National Careers Taskforce group (Patton, 2005). In Canada, Provincial and Territorial Governments are responsible for setting the curriculum and delivery standards for career development and a Council that oversees the formulation of relevant educational policies and initiatives (Second International Symposium, 2001). With this kind of structure, it is easier to develop quality policies and programs.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the effect of career guidance on students' readiness to make career choices. From the findings, there was insufficient evidence to confirm that career guidance services offered in the institution had an effect on readiness to make career choices. Additionally, the study did not provide sufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis that family socio-economic background of the students did not mediate the effect of career guidance on students' readiness to make career choices. Moreover, the students mostly perceived themselves to have had minimal interaction with career guidance services at the institution yet they were very confident of their readiness to make career decisions. Therefore, their readiness to make career choices could have been as a result of other intrinsic or external factors that had minimal influence from the career guidance services offered at the institution, consistent with studies indicating that career guidance services in higher education in Africa were limited (OECD, 2004; Watts & Sultana, 2004).

Career guidance practitioners and policy makers in higher education should establish services that are well understood by students by developing a separate formal career guidance curriculum or building them as examinable courses to be implemented at each level of study; ensuring continuity in career development grounded in the socio-cultural context. Intensive career guidance trainings will develop the competence of career guidance staff and increase the number of staff available to offer these services. Career information should be available in formats that appeal to students in accordance to their age and responsive to labour market information. Finally, increased focus on building strong policy frameworks and legislation both at institutional and national level will raise the standards of career guidance in Kenya is recommended.

Future longitudinal studies with a bigger sample spread throughout Africa and in different contexts in Kenya and in Africa, could give further empirical evidence of the status of career guidance in higher education in the continent.

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