Influence of Academic Achievement Perception on Choice of Training Programmes in Public Secondary Schools in Kenya.

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Abstract

The choice of a career is very important because it affects one's entire life. To enable students make this crucial decision, career guidance is offered in secondary schools in Kenya to help the students realise their potential, develop their abilities and select training programmes they want to pursue after secondary school consequently leading to appropriate careers. Through career guidance, secondary school students are assisted to comprehend their academic achievements and identify training programmes and careers that they qualify for to ensure suitable selection. Yet there are many students who fail to qualify for the training programmes they had chosen. While others try to change the training programmes they had chosen immediately after admission or after a period of study in the university, indicating a dissatisfying choice. This study was carried out to establish the perceptions of students and career counsellors about the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in selected counties of Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The study areas were Mombasa, Meru and Kiambu counties of Kenya. The target population was 31,145 form four students in 394 public secondary schools. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 395 students from 33 schools. In addition 33 career counsellors were purposively sampled. The data was collected using two questionnaires and was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistics (mean and percentages) were used in data analysis. The findings of the study were that academic achievement was perceived to influence the choice of training programmes.

Keywords: Career, Career Guidance, Academic Achievement, Perception, Training Programmes

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Introduction

Career choice is a very important aspect of life because career is a journey through life, from birth to retirement. It goes beyond an occupation to involve other components like community and social responsibility, enterprise activities, hobbies and interests, cultural activities, education, training and life roles. An individual's choice of career determines where one lives, how one lives

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and with whom one associates with. If people have to excel and enjoy life they should carefully choose the right careers (Zunker, 2002). The choice of training programmes made by individuals forms a base for the person's future career. In Kenya the students' academic performance in secondary school determines the training programmes they qualify to undertake in the university or institutions of higher learning (Ndegwa, 2011;GOK, 2011). Therefore, one of the major tasks of career guidance is to assist students to realise their academic potential (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2004) and capitalise on it for optimal performance. A career counsellor who is equipped with career information is appointed in every secondary school to facilitate guidance to students (GOK, 1976). career counsellor avails career booklets and on-line information to students to create awareness about the academic requirements for various training programmes (OECD, 2002). Students are assisted to select subjects that are pre-requisite to the desired training programmes and consequent careers.

The academic performance of the students is monitored through internal examinations throughout the four years of study in preparation for the K.C.S.E. With all this effort it is obvious that every student is aware of his/her academic achievement before selecting academic programmes they would want to pursue in the university or institutions of higher learning. studies indicate that students have adequate career information (Ngumi, 2008) and career counsellors (Gacohi, Sindabi & Omulema, 2011). Despite all this effort, it is common to find students failing to qualify for the courses they had selected thus receiving admission for undesired courses. It is evident that students seek to change the courses they had selected immediately after

admission or after a period of study indicating a dissatisfying choice. It is against this background that the study intended to determine the perception of students and career counsellors about the influence of academic achievement on choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in selected counties of Kenya. The objective was to determine the students perception of and counsellors about the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in selected counties of Kenya.

Materials and Methods

A descriptive survey research design was used. The study was carried out in public secondary schools in Mombasa, Meru and Kiambu counties of Kenya. The population of the study was all form four students and career counsellors in the selected counties. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select the sample of study which was three hundred and ninety five (395) form four students and thirty three (33) career counsellors. Data was collected using two questionnaires and was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0.

Results

The response rate for this study was 386 (98%) for the students and 30(91%) for the career counsellors. The objective was to determine the perception of students and career counsellors about the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes in public secondary schools in selected counties of Kenya. This objective was based on the fact that academic achievement of a student influences his/her career choice and ultimate choice of training programme. In this study,

the students and career counsellors were presented with eight statements depicting various aspects of academic achievement and how they influence choice of training programmes. They were requested to rate the extent of influence of each of these aspects on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (where, 1= Strongly disagree - SD, 2 = Disagree - D, 3 = Undecided - U, 4

= Agree - A and 5 = Strongly Agree - SA). The higher the score, the higher was the level of influence of the various aspects of academic achievement on the choice of training programme, and vice versa. Tables 1 and 2 depict the distribution of the rating of the career counsellors and students, respectively.

Table 1: Career Counsellors' Ratings of the Influence of Aspects of Academic Achievement

on Choice of Training Programmes

	Respons	se (%)				
Statements	SD	D	\mathbf{U}	A	SA	Means
Students choose the training	0	2	7	12	9	3.93
programmes that require the	(0.0%)	(6.7%)	(23.3%)	(40.0%)	(30.0%)	
subjects they are good in						
Students choose training	1	3	4	13	9	3.87
programmes that they qualify for	(3.3%)	(10.0%)	(13.3%)	(43.3%)	(30.0%)	
in terms of academic						
achievements						
Students choose the subjects in			2	13	14	3.73
which they have the ability to	(0.0%)	(23.3%)	(6.7%)	(43.3%)	(13.3%)	
perform better						
Students know the training		8	3	13	6	3.57
programmes that will lead to	(0.0%)	(26.7%)	(10.0%)	(43.3%)	(20.0%)	
their careers of interest		_	_			
Students know their academic	0	7	6	11	6	3.53
capabilities	(0.0%)	(23.3%)		(36.7%)		
Students are aware of the level of	1	6	5	12	6	3.53
academic achievement required	(3.3%)	(20.0%)	(16.7%)	(40.0%)	(20.0%)	
for the training programmes of						
their interest	0	0	~	10	4	2.42
Students know the subject				_	4	3.43
requirements for their careers of	(0.0%)	(26.7%)	(16./%)	(43.3%)	(13.3%)	
interest	2	7	4	10	4	2.22
Students know the subject			4	13	4	3.33
requirements for the training	(6./%)	(23.5%)	(13.5%)	(43.5%)	(13.3%)	
programmes of their interest						

Table 2: Students' Ratings of the Influence of Aspects of Academic Achievement on Choice

of Training Programmes

	Response	(%)				
Statements	SD	D	\mathbf{U}	\mathbf{A}	SA	Means
I know my academic	7	7	27	139	206	4.37
capabilities	(1.8%)	(1.8%)	(7.0%)	(36.0%)	(53.4%)	
I chose subjects in which I	15	10	23	140	187	4.28
have the ability to perform	(3.9%)	(2.6%)	(6.0%)	(36.3%)	(51.3%)	
better						
I know the subject	9	12	49	135	187	4.24
requirements of the training	(2.3%)	(3.1%)	(11.1%)	(35.0%)	(48.4%)	
programmes of my interest						
I know the level of academic	8	18	52	141	167	4.14
achievement required for the	(2.1%)	(4.7%)	(13.5%)	(36.5%)	(43.3%)	
training programmes I am						
interested in						
I know the training	10	15	65	136	160	4.09
programmes that will lead to	(2.6%)	(3.9%)	(16.8%)	(35.2%)	(41.5%)	
my careers of interest						
I chose training programmes	14	20	45	153	1254	4.07
that I qualify for in terms of	(3.6%)	(5.2%)	(11.7%)	(39.6%)	(39.9%)	
academic achievements						
I chose training programmes	19	24	39	144	160	4.04
that require the subjects that	(4.9%)	(6.2%)	(10.1%)	(37.3%)	(41.5%)	
am good in						
I know the training	12	19	70	126	159	4.04
programme that will lead to	(3.1%)	(4.9%)	(18.1%)	(32.6%)	(41.2%)	
my career of interest						

The overall perception of the students and career counsellors about the influence of student academic achievement on the choice of training programmes was determined by the cumulative interaction of all the eleven statements. Therefore, the responses to each constituent statement were scored on a scale of 1, indicating least/not useful perception, to 5, indicating high/useful perception. The overall perception of the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes was obtained by summing up the individual scores to form academic achievement index score for each respondent. The index score varied between 8. indicating (least) not the perception, and 40, indicating the most

useful perception of the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes. The higher the score, the more useful the academic achievement on the choice of training programmes was perceived, and vice versa. The index score was later collapsed into three ordinal categories in order to differentiate the levels of perception of the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training sampled programmes among the respondents. This included a score of 8-18 meaning low/not useful perception, a score of 19-29 (neutral perception) and a score of 30-40 indicating high/useful perception of the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes. Table 3

depicts the overall perception of students and school counsellors about the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes.

Table 3: Career Counsellors' and Students' Perceptions about the Influence of Academic Achievement on the Choice of Training Programmes

	Counsellors		Students		
Perception	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Not Useful	1	3.3	5	1.3	
Neutral	15	50.0	80	20.7	
Useful	14	46.7	301	78.0	
Total	30	100.0	386	100.0	

Discussion

Findings on Table 1 indicates that the school career counsellors rated all the eight aspects of students' academic achievement influencing choice of training programme as useful (above average 3.00). Majority of the career counsellors 21(70%) indicated that students select the training programmes that require subjects they are good in and qualify for. This means that the students are aware of their academic performance which is an indicator of effective career guidance. Majority of the career counsellors 22 (73.3%) also indicated that students were aware of their academic capabilities and the academic requirements for the training programmes and careers of interest. This indicates that the career counsellors must have dealt with the aspect of academic performance and career requirements at length. Also this information is readily available in the career booklets that students indicated earlier are helpful to them (G.O.K 2011). However the career counsellors' ratings of students' knowledge about the subjects requirements for careers and training programmes were slightly lower 17 (56.6%) compared to other responses. 2(6.7%) of the career counsellors strongly disagreed, 7 (23.3%) disagreed while 4 (13.3%) were not decided on whether the students knew the subject requirements for

training programmes they were interested in. This reflects that career counsellors might not have interacted with students on individual subject requirements in relation to careers and training programmes. Some career counsellors might have left out linking the subject requirements and training programmes which is essential in career guidance.

Findings on Table 2 indicates that the students rated all the eight aspects of student academic achievement influencing choice of training programme as useful (above average 3.00). This suggests that most of the students are aware of their academic achievements and their choice of training programmes and careers is based on this knowledge. This is possible because students sit for examinations frequently in school. Moreover, administrations put a lot of emphasis on academic performance. However, they rated the aspects on the relationship of subjects, training programmes and careers slightly lower compared to others. This indicates that some students do not have sufficient knowledge on the relationship between subjects, training programmes and careers which is basic in career guidance.

However. the students and school counsellors varied in their individual rating of each aspect of academic achievement. The students' ratings were higher than the career counsellors. This is most probably because the career counsellors responded from the knowledge they had about the students and what they have done in career guidance, while the students responded according to their self-awareness. The students rated the fact that they knew their academic achievements highest, as opposed to the career counsellors who rank this aspect fifth. This clearly shows that students conceited about their academic performance and career counsellors feel that they can do better. This indicates that although majority of the students may know their academic achievements, some of them need more guidance to know their ability and perform better.

Findings on Table 3 indicates that 301 (78.0%) of the students perceived the students' academic achievement as useful in influencing the choice of training programmes. On the other hand, only 14 (46.7%) of the school counsellors perceived it useful. This suggests that most students are aware of their academic achievements and can relate with training programmes and careers appropriately indicating that career guidance assists students to select training programmes. However the percentage of career counsellors who perceived the influence of the academic achievements on the choice of training programmes useful was slightly lower than the students. Also 15(50%) of the career counsellors were neutral regarding the influence of academic achievement on the choice of training programmes. Most probably the career counsellors being aware of the potential of the students they were not certain if the students' choice of training programmes was influenced by their academic achievement since in most cases students do not exploit their full potential in their academic work (Mundia, 2006). The career counsellors may also be responding according to the level of career guidance they have given the students.

Conclusion

According to the perceptions of students and career counsellors the academic achievement influences the students' choice of training programmes. The students are aware of their academic achievements and select training programmes that they can qualify for. However the students may have not exploited their academic potential fully according to the response from the career counsellors, therefore they might not be themselves appropriately rating selecting training programmes. The idea of relating subjects, training programmes and careers was not fully addressed in career guidance. This is evident from the fact that some students claimed not to be aware of subject requirements for training programmes and careers of their interest.

Recommendations

The study recommended that career counsellors should assist students exploit their academic potential fully and apply better methods of helping students to select appropriate training programmes.

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