

Influence of Guidance and Counselling on Choice of Careers in Home Science Education Programme in Kenyan Universities

Abstract

Aims: This study sought to establish the extent of influence of guidance and counselling on choice of Home Science education programme in universities.

Study design: This study adopted the Convergent Parallel mixed method design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches at the same time

Place and Duration of Study: University of Eldoret and Kenyatta University, Kenya, between October 2020 and October 2021.

Methodology: Purposive sampling was used to select the two Universities where Two (2) Heads of Department were purposively selected and 254 students were conveniently selected and took part in this study.

Results: This study established that guidance and counselling played a key role in choice of Home Science education programme. Majority of the respondents were aware of the many career opportunities in the field and the availability of career information resources. Home science teachers were the key persons offering guidance and counselling. A small number of respondents revealed that they did not benefit because the schools they had attended did not offer guidance and counselling services.

Conclusion: Guidance and counselling offered to students played a key role and this made them choose Home Science Education programme at the University.

Keywords: Guidance and counselling; choice of careers; home science education programme; Universities

1. INTRODUCTION

The choice of a career is an important task to a student. Students pursuing programmes in the universities face difficulties. [1] believe that the young people of today have more decisions to make than before. They argue that the process of choosing an institution together with the programme of study is one big decision that has to be made by an individual. In most cases, the choice of programmes to be pursued by students in post-secondary is determined by the subjects chosen at secondary school. [2,1] point out that the selection of a course/subject profiles the choices students have after leaving high school for post-secondary. They argue that the choices made by students are tied with educational choices that act as doorways to continue with their studies and progress into their preferred careers.

[1] further urge on the need to embark on career guidance in institutions with an aim of bringing to surface students' preferences so as to inform them of education and work paths to follow. [3] in their study of the Romanian business and administration students experience found out that the option of choosing a given University with a specific field to study was indeed an early forecaster of their career choice and development. They further indicated that initial career choice is made after secondary school education. They thus support that career guidance and counselling during secondary school education is an important tool of influencing the students' future professional paths. In unison to [3,4,23], established that career guidance and counselling indeed had a big

influence in the choice of a programme to study. With an effective and an efficient guidance and counselling in schools, students will overcome the difficulties of choosing careers.

Career guidance is usually offered with an aim of helping people from an overall understanding of life and work to a precise understanding of truths of life, learning and work choices that may be available to them [5]. [6] in their study indicated that many students are wrong in choosing their majors and usually find difficulties in learning. They further show that many people who work do so not according to their interests, skills and ultimately choose to get out of work. This may be as a result of frustrations that students will most likely encounter as they make career decision choices.

[7] indicate that career guidance is intended to provide the widest possible opportunity for students to develop their potential talents and interest that is based on individual differences. The aspect of career guidance and counselling is mostly offered while people are continuing with education, as they transit to the labour market, changes in career, periods of unemployment and on transition toward retirement phase [8]. [9] established that information service and counselling service significantly influenced career choice of students.

Still in West Africa, a study by [10] established that career guidance and counselling was indeed an influencing factor in the choice of careers as it played a key role. [11] the deficiency of career information and leadership determines the high rate of perplexity of its probable students in making career choices of programmes and may also determine their rate of school dropout. The issue of dropping out of studies is further emphasized by [12] who indicate that when students have problems in selection of careers, they end up being frustrated, dissatisfied and will end up seeking for new avenues. The authors strongly advocate for career guidance programmes in schools as they provide professional service to students to empower them make appropriate decisions on career choices that will lead them to pursue relevant, market oriented and competitive careers.

[13] indicated that students choose their careers grounded on information from the career guidance teachers. They therefore concluded that the delivery of career guidance services has a tendency of positively influencing student's decisions on career choices. Further [14] showed that students career consciousness had significant connection with decisions made by the students. Here, students that are endowed with adequate career awareness were able to make their career choices.

Contrary to this, [15] indicated that the schools with a high occurrence and a wide variation of career guidance activities had developed career development in comparison with those that had low frequency and limited activities. They showed that these activities helped the students to explore, understand and develop their own career interests. They further noted that those students that are not cognizant of careers had problems making career decisions and that provision of career guidance and

counselling services significantly enhanced the levels of career awareness and career planning among students in Kenyan secondary schools.

Despite the fact that the availability of career guidance and counselling in schools is an important aspect in choice of careers among students, there exists a challenge on its inadequacy and unavailability. A study by [16] established that there existed a shortage of career guidance and counselling services, career guidance teachers were overloaded with academic classwork and insufficient information on different careers disadvantaged the implementation of career guidance services. In addition, [17] confirmed that the kind of career guidance provided in schools was inadequate in enabling students to make their choices.

Similarly, [18] established that majority of teachers were inadequately equipped to handle career guidance programme. Also, they indicated that the aspect of career indecisiveness was as a result of lack of awareness in terms of abilities and skills, insufficient educational knowledge, poor self-knowledge with students and the ill-equipped career education resources. This suggests that students may not be adequately guided in choosing their subjects to help make career choices.

Another study by [20] indicates that lack of awareness about what happens at the university by the majority of students in secondary schools limited their university course selection and career decision making processes. They further argue that career certainty of most students has been compromised as a result of insufficient knowledge on their abilities, aptitudes and potentials. [8] confirmed that career information had a high influence on degree choice and University placement. She did indicate in her study that this aspect of career information was a significant factor in influencing the choice of a degree programme. Despite the fact that the reviewed literature on career guidance and counselling shows that it is an important aspect of career choices, there seems to be challenges that most schools face in its implementation that in the end affects students in making their choices. Therefore, this study intended to fill the knowledge gap on whether availability of guidance and counselling on careers had an effect on the choice of careers in Home Science Education programme in universities.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was guided by the Social Cognitive Career Theory that explores how career choices are made by self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals. This study adopted the Convergent Parallel mixed method design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches at the same time. The study was conducted in Uasin Gishu and Kiambu counties which have universities with programmes that train Home Science educators found. This study adopted purposive sampling technique to select two universities offering the Home Science Education programmes. Data for the study was obtained by using questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion guides. Quantitative data was analyzed and then presented using distribution tables and graphs. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and then used to compare with that of quantitative data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first item in Figure 1 showed that 24.0% of the respondents disagreed that they had sufficient information concerning their Home Science Education programme before choosing it while 69.3% agreed. This suggests that they may have gone through guidance and counselling sessions on how well to choose a career in Home Science. Works of [7] and [5] clarifies that career guidance is usually offered with an aim of helping people from an overall understanding of life and work to a precise understanding of truths of life, learning and work choices that may be available. They affirm that career guidance is intended to provide the widest possible opportunity for students to develop their potential talents and interest.

The focus group discussion helped shade some light in this item as most students indicated that they had received some guidance that helped them make their choices. For example;

Guidance and counselling from my Home Science teacher contributed to the choice of Home Science. By then, we were two guys in that class and quite a large number of girls. Our teacher would always call us, counsel and encourage us and we coped. Some students critiqued and would tell us, 'It's like you are girlish!' (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

Guidance and counselling played an important role in the choice of Home Science. My mentor was my Home Science teacher and would tell me how Home Science is wide. She told me 'If you choose this course, it will help you in future, even if you don't work for the government, you can create your own job'. (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

[10] had similar results to those of this study that career guidance and counselling was an influencing factor and thus played a key role in choice of Home Science education programme. Despite the fact that the above study was done in a high school, there is clear indication that choice of a course to pursue at the university may directly be linked to the choice of subjects chosen in high school.

As much as a higher number of respondents may have indicated that they had sufficient information concerning Home Science education programme before choosing, quite a number of them revealed that they didn't have sufficient information. For instance, during a focus group discussion the following excerpt may clearly indicate otherwise;

In our school there was never guidance and counselling actually, I didn't know there's any course like Home Science and technology then. Guidance and counselling should be strengthened because you find someone choosing a course and when they start studying the course, they feel like, "I think I should change or drop it". Home Science is just perfect for me. (FGD 4, 18/12/2020)

Concerning career guidance, I think for me I want to speak this on behalf of men I think Home Science was never given a chance to be learnt, heard and given an independent entity like the others. A lot of pressure was given to science, education, engineering. Home Science was undermined; we never had that chance to be told. I came to discover Home Science much later and thought I could do this and that, there was no communication, no concern towards Home Science. Guidance and counselling didn't play a role, for men Home Science is a shameful subject the course is for women the job of washing dishes, cooking is for mothers they just think you are a professional woman (Laughter). Home Science being a female dominated area just pushes men away. But being in Home Science course I've learnt so much, in a female dominated area. I've gone through it and I now know what I want (FGD 2, 3/12/2020)

Further information was retrieved during the interview with the Heads of Department/Chairs of Department that students may not have received sufficient information. For instance, as much as principals from high school were making calls looking for teachers of Home Science, the head would interrogate them on whether they had a large number of students taking Home Science subject. From the interaction, the Heads of Department had feelings that the principals were to blame in that whoever was responsible with guiding students on career choices was not doing their part. They believed that if at all students were given sufficient information pertaining Home Science subject in high school, a large number of students would have selected the subject which would greatly influence them to enroll for Home Science Education programme at the university. It also came out clearly from the interviews that a number of those students seeking to transfer to Home Science Education programme from their first programme of admission indicated that they didn't know Home Science Education as being a good area. Their thoughts had been diverted to appear as though Home Science was only concentrated with cooking and sewing.

In addition, the focus group discussions revealed that majority of the people and society in particular had no much information pertaining to the offering of the subject and programme in the university. The excerpts below are good example worth noting;

Guidance and counselling should be there, students who are coming to the university should be guided before selecting their courses, when we asked, I was told 'education and science is just the same, you'll reach there then select any science you want' so, I just assumed that Home Science is part of the science subjects, but when I reached here, it was different..... there was very poor guidance (FGD 4, 18/12/2020)

I remember telling a friend of mine that I was admitted at the university to do Home Science education programme and she was like 'You do not know how to cook? You intend to pursue Home Science education programme to guarantee you cooking for four good years at the university? (FGD 1, 10/11/2020)

Home Science education is a good course but sensitization is still very low, so they should enhance guidance and counselling. People should stop wondering when they hear that you are going to pursue Home Science and they are like “you are learning this course to go and cook?” (FGD 4, 18/12/2020)

[17] in their study on factors that influence selection of undergraduate degree choices by students in public universities in Kenya had similar findings that the kind of career guidance provided in schools and in particular high school was inadequate to enable students make their career choices. Further, [8] backs this study that career information had a high influence on degree choice and university placement. Therefore, it can be concluded that sufficient information on career guidance and counselling plays a critical role in the choice of a programme of study at the university.

Item two showed that 2.8% of the respondents disagreed that there are many careers related to Home Science Education programme while 93.7% agreed. This indicates that majority of the students had sufficient information concerning the number of Home Science related education programmes. This implies that they may have undergone a guidance and counselling sessions or probably read career books that indicated the various careers related to Home Science. Also, from the secondary Home Science syllabus covered, there are various topics where students would venture into and later translate them to preferred careers. An excerpt from the focus discussion group is as follows;

The teacher who guided students on careers was a male chemistry teacher. He encouraged us to pursue Home Science at the university because of the opportunities that abound in careers and getting jobs. He encouraged us not to drop the subject because it's something we could move on with. He had passion in Home Science. (FGD 2, 3/12/2020)

[21] opined that Home Science is the only discipline that is uniquely blended to offer its learners a variety of skills. This therefore signifies that the varied topics/content offered in the Home Science education programme meets the needs of its individual learners.

The third item showed that 47.6% of the respondents disagreed that their school counselor gave them information concerning Home Science Education programme, while 47.2% agreed. This implies that a number of schools did not have counsellors in their school to guide on careers selection or probably they may have been passively involved in career guidance. To help elaborate on this item, excerpts from the focus group discussion had clear indications that some respondents were disadvantaged from getting services from a career guidance counselor;

I can say not everyone from different schools receive guidance and counselling. We were not guided in career choice, it was up to you to make your own decisions, see what is fit for you. Home Science students were passing, they had interest but they didn't know what Home Science

would offer them in future. Not everyone is advantaged to receive guidance and counselling. (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

We were never guided on a teaching career but we were guided on some other things that were away from teaching. I can't remember being guided on teaching. We were guided mostly on 'big' things like how to manage businesses, engineering, medicine and not teaching. Many people are not interested in teaching, so they don't focus on that area (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

From the above excerpts, it's evident that most of the respondents did not enjoy the services of a guidance counselor. Similarly, [3] argued that there is need for students to be equipped with career guidance at the secondary level which in the long run becomes a tool to shape students career paths. In the event that guidance and counseling are offered to students, it may be done with particular careers in mind. Such careers are perceived to be those of the 'high ended'. This aspect came out clearly from the qualitative data that if at all guidance was offered, it may have been concentrated to particular subjects deemed to narrow down to particular courses at the institutions of higher learning. They felt that there is need to build confidence for qualification in the early years in secondary education. Excerpts from the focus group discussions drew emphasis on this, examples are as indicated below;

In form one form two, we were just confused. We wanted to be a doctor, an engineer, some funny courses(laughter) but in form three you are being guided by your guidance teacher, you are told to stop dreaming or imagining to do some courses that you cannot manage. now you just put stress on subjects where you can achieve your goal there was an interactive session in form three. (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

Guidance and counselling teachers need to be empowered on what Home Science can do instead of advising students to venture into certain courses e.g., engineering. They should be realistic on advices they give to students; they tend to influence students to do engineering, and how many engineers are graduating without jobs? They should be realistic and compare to the situation we are in right now, no employment. We need courses to help build an industrialized country, a self-empowerment country and Home Science course is one of them, they should be given that chance to tell people what Home Science offers in the long run (FGD 2, 3/12/2020)

The fourth item in showed that 31.1% of the respondents disagreed that career information resources influenced them in choosing Home Science Education programme, whereas 59.4% agreed. It is important to note that career information resources are now easily accessible. This has been made possible by the establishment of the KUCCPS which runs its programmes online. This implies that the students may have retrieved information from the KUCCPS portal to guide them

accordingly. In addition, students may have accessed career information resources in their schools. Excerpts from the focus group discussion are indicated below;

We had a career wheel which motivated us, like when you had passed well in a subject, you could go to the career wheel and try fitting into the career then you see that you needed Home Science, then you fit yourself there. A career wheel did something for us, and I guess everyone who did Home Science in my school has benefited they got something better from the guidance and counselling from the school (FGD 3, 18/12/2020)

I think guidance and counselling should be improved in schools from the moment a student joins in form one. There's something I've seen in many schools, called career wheel, they should be told that when you do this subject, you get to have such opportunities to do different careers, those career wheels have an impact (FGD 4, 18/12/2020)

There is clear indication that offering of career guidance need to be beefed up in schools as they bear fruit in the long run. And if possible, there should be varied methods of passing the information to the learners. In the works of [12] they indeed emphasized the value of guidance and counselling where they indicated that when students have problems in the selection of careers, they may end up being frustrated, dissatisfied and resort to seek new ventures. Their school of thought concerning adequate availability of career guidance is that they provide professional service to students thus empowers them make appropriate decisions. Further, [14] in their work on status of career awareness showed that career consciousness has a significant connection with students' decisions. Thus, students endowed with adequate information on careers will end up making appropriate choice.

Item five showed that 85.8% of the respondents disagreed that nobody had ever talked to them about careers related to Home Science Education while 9.4% agreed. This imply that they may have been talked to in one way or another concerning career choice.

The sixth statement further showed that 88.6% disagreed that they had no access to any career information on choice of Home Science Education, while 7.5% agreed. This implies that they may have at one point accessed information from school, internet or even from the corporate communication sections of the university.

The last statement showed that 2.4% of the respondents disagreed that guidance and counselling is important in career choice, while 92.9 % agreed. From the focus group discussions, it was the feeling of the respondents that guidance and counselling should be provided as it played a key role in the choice of subjects and programme of admission into the university. An excerpt is as follows;

When you are choosing the subjects, you are given an overview about the subjects and based on what you like, you would choose the subject that is

how we ended up choosing between Home Science and Agriculture. Home Science teacher would say, “If your parent, sibling or friend told you to do Home Science because there are opportunities, don’t do it! the subject has a lot of demands, but if you are doing out of passion, then you can go on” that was some guidance we received (FGD 4, 18/12/2022)

[15] in their study established closely similar results with those of this study that schools with a high occurrence and wide variety of career guidance activities had developed career development. They strongly indicated that these various activities facilitated the students to explore, understand and develop their own careers. They believed that availability of career guidance significantly enhanced levels of career awareness and career planning hence, students experience minimal challenges. From the above discussions, it’s evident that availability of guidance and counselling in secondary schools is indeed paramount and should be enhanced.

Further probing in the focus group discussions were done with an aim of establishing practical ways in which the offering of guidance and counselling could be improved to help students in making career choices decisions as they transit into the institutions of higher learning. This item may be considered to be of importance in this study as there are indications that the services provided may not be adequate or may not be available as discussed earlier on. An excerpt from one of the discussions is as follows;

Guidance and counselling should be strengthened in high school so that students do not waste their opportunities. Teachers should guide students, mostly in boy’s schools because we believe it’s a female course, not one gender schools, should be balanced (FGD 4, 18/12/2020)

Home Science should be given a space, should give information on what Home Science is all about. There is this assumption that Home Science is all about cooking, a lot of stitching only; we have fashion design and a lot of good things. Students particularly the form ones as they come to school, should be told what Home Science is about (FGD 2, 3/12/2020)

From the above excerpts, there is need to empower schools particularly with career guidance counsellors to help students. As much as the teachers could offer the guidance, they need to be well equipped to offer appropriate guidance. However, [16] alluded that there existed a shortage of career guidance and counselling services. She indicated that career guidance teachers were laden with academic classwork and insufficient information on different careers deprived the implementation of career guidance. The interview with the Heads of Department/Chairs of Department were also of the opinion that the principals and particularly Home Science teachers should be the steering force in championing their students to like Home Science subject and should deliberately inform them of the areas that one can venture into in the institutions of higher learning after studying Home Science in secondary schools. They also believed that the choice of subjects at high school should be done with proper guidance.

Further, [22] concluded that the level of career guidance and counseling provided in secondary schools was neither well planned nor organized. Similarly, they noted that there were no clear guidelines in which the service was provided and thus concluded that decisions on degree programmes by the students were guided by other factors.

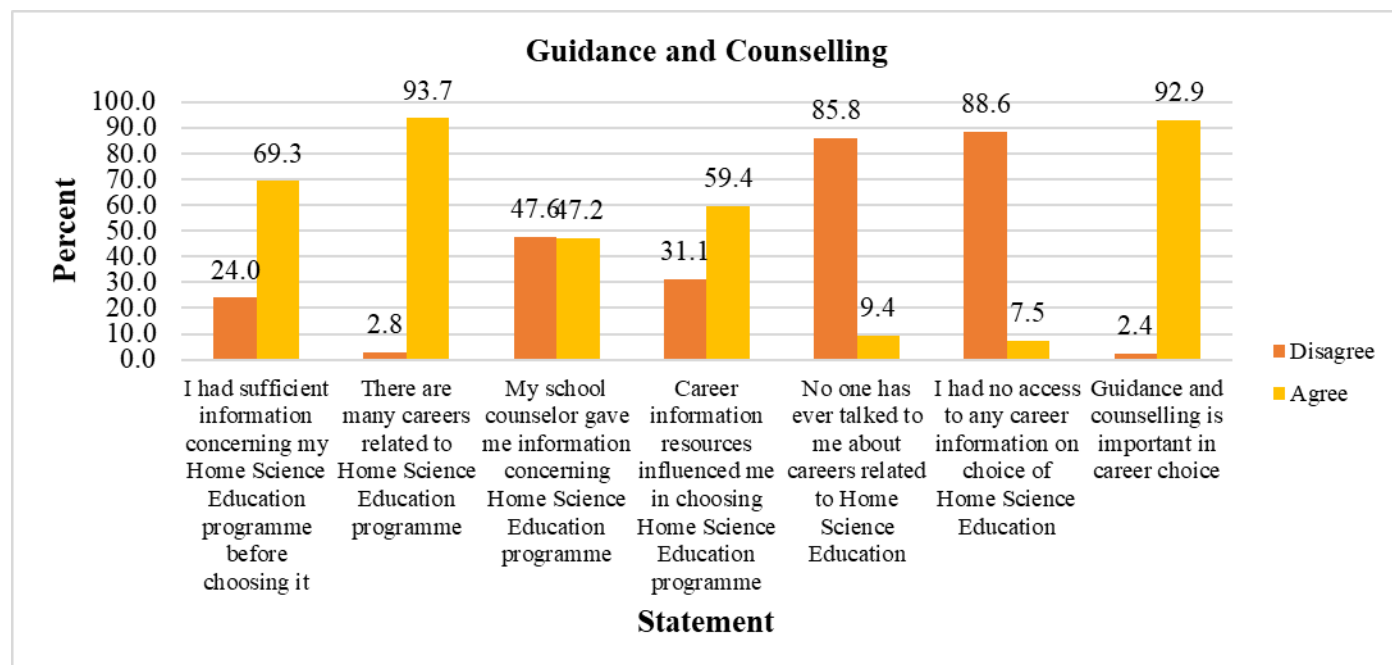


Fig. 1. Guidance and Counselling on Choice of Home Science Education Programme

4. CONCLUSION

This study established that guidance and counselling played a key role in choice of Home Science Education programme. This was depicted by the majority of the respondents indicating that they were very much aware of the many career opportunities in the field and the availability of many career information resources. It is also important to note that as much as guidance and counselling services were in some schools, some respondents in other schools did not have them and thus were disadvantaged to some extent. It is also clear that most of the information they received on careers emanated from their teachers who happened to be Home Science teachers.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need to offer and strengthen guidance and counselling in schools right from the early primary through the secondary education. Career wheels should be used in schools since respondents in this study had benefitted greatly from them. The

Ministry of Education in conjunction with its stakeholders should provide more personnel particularly career guidance personnel who will offer appropriate services as they are capable of alleviating subject teachers who are overburdened especially with the running of school activities with the 100% transition.

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