

The Status of Career Guidance in Ensuring Quality Education in Harar and Woliso Technical and Vocational Colleges, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine the contribution of career guidance in quality education in Harar and Woliso Technical and Vocational colleges. Descriptive survey research design was employed to assess the status of career guidance in ensuring quality education in the two selected colleges. The sources of information were two purposefully selected guidance personnel, 190 students and 93 instructors who were randomly selected after stratification based on their fields of studies. Questionnaires were used as data gathering instruments. In the analysis of data, qualitative description of information from the open-ended questions and statistics such as frequency and percentage were used in the analysis of closed-ended questions. The results of the empirical investigation indicated a lack of policy guideline at the institutional level, which is considered to be indispensable to the initiation and to sustain career guidance. Systematic career guidance and guidance programmes are lacking, and there is a scarcity of facilities that should have been set aside for career guidance. The personnel providing career guidance are not appropriately trained, and seldom received the opportunity to undergo in-service training. As a result, career guidance is not contributing to quality education as required. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for further investigation were made.

Keywords: career guidance, career development, quality education, TVET colleges

1. Introduction

Career guidance is useful in self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making skills and transition skills (Watts et al, 1996; Lussier, 2005; Koul, 2006), thus, assists individuals to make satisfying educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (Sultana, 2004). Career guidance also increases effectiveness of training, industrial efficiency and promote the adjustment of the workers (Guilford, 2005), and ensure lifelong learning,

social inclusion, labour market efficiency, and economic development (Scheerens, 2004).

A variety of career theories offer the conceptual framework for career guidance interventions in assisting students to achieve their career goals. These theories can be thematically organised under person-environment fit theories, developmental theories and cognitive-behavioural theories. According to person-environment fit theories there are unique innate traits and attributes

required for different kinds of work that can be measured and matched with one's occupational profile (Coertse & Schepers, 2004). Person-environment fit is making match or alignment between persons' characteristics and environmental requirements (Sekiguchi, 2004).

Developmental theories have the viewpoint that choosing a career and managing one's career development involve a continuous process that carries on through life (Herr & Cramer, 1996; Coertse & Schepers, 2004). Thus, these theories give more weight to the view that individuals fit into various occupations at different times in their lives.

The cognitive-behavioral theories advocate the multiple sources of influence in one's career development. Like person-environment theories, the cognitive-behavioral theories emphasize the importance of genetic make-up, self-awareness, occupational information and integration of self-awareness and occupational information. Akin to developmental theories, the cognitive-behavioral theories underline that career development is development sensitive. Unlike the two, the sources of career development are not only related to those content and process characteristics, but also equally related to past learning experiences, family, social and cultural restrictions or socialization, work-related attitudes and values.

All theories have the presumption that by attending students' career development it is possible to increase the intensity of achievement motivation and facilitate students' ability to achieve academically

(Gysbers & Henderson, 2006 as cited in Rivera & Schaefer, 2009). Rivera and Schaefer (2009) further identified that career development interventions can contribute to quality education by developing students' sense of engagement in school and higher levels of motivation. It also contributes to the internal efficiency of the higher learning institutions by reducing repetition rate and dropout rate, and increase graduate output (Auma-Okumu, 2011).

Reciprocally, quality education enhances career development because it is through education that one can identify his/her potential, interest and determine in which vocation and occupation to pursue. Educational experiences also promote career-related attitudes and knowledge about oneself and the realities of the world of work. Thus, career guidance bridges between education and career development.

However, worldwide there is lack of trained personnel in higher learning institutions providing career guidance (International Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004; European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2009) and the existing guidance concentrate on personal or study/academic guidance rather than ensuring students' career development (Lairio & Penttinen, 2006; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Sharf, 2006), plan career guidance and assign skilled counsellors (Heppner & Johnston, 1989; Stead & Watson, 1998) that in turn contribute to quality of

education (Chireshe, 2006; Debono et al., 2007).

Similarly, in spite of the fact that the 1994 Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (Ministry of Education, 1994) strive to warrant the interface among career guidance, career development and education, the existing career guidance in Ethiopia is not responsive to students' career development and ensuring quality of education. The integration of career development and quality education in educational system is usually overlooked and scarce attention was given by researchers (Yilfashewa, 2011; Yirgalem, 2013). Thus, whether institutional guidance policy guideline is in place or not, resources are properly allocated and the extent to which the existing career guidance is contributing to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia are unknown. The intention of this study is, therefore, to answer the following research questions:

1. How well are career guidance policy guideline and resources organized in Harar and Woliso Technical and Vocational Colleges?
2. What are the perceptions of guidance personnel and students as to the effectiveness of career guidance in their colleges?
3. How well is career guidance service organised in a way to ensure quality of education in Harar and Woliso Technical and Vocational Colleges?

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1 Research design

The goal of this empirical research is to investigate the status of career guidance and its contribution to quality education in Woliso and Harar TVET colleges. This study made use of descriptive survey research design with quantitative research method. A descriptive survey research design was used to describe the current status of career guidance and its contribution to quality education. A survey study was used as a quantitative research design. It mainly focuses on research design, test and measurement procedure of a reality and statistical analysis to respond to research questions requiring numerical data (Williams, 2007). The quantitative research method is used to obtain numerical data (Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2006).

2.2 Population and sample

In the selection of 93 (40%) instructors and 190 (10%) third year students a random sampling technique was used after stratification according to their fields of studies in the two selected TVET colleges. The selection of respondents from each field was to obtain information regarding the situation of career guidance and its contribution to quality education in each field. Guidance personnel (one from each college) were purposefully included in the study. The selection of the two colleges depends on the

information that they provide guidance and counselling service by guidance personnel, instructors or at least by guidance committee.

2.3 Instruments

Questionnaires were used to acquire information from the respondents. The questionnaires were used to obtain information from students and instructors concerning their observation and opinion of the status of career guidance and its role in quality education in their institutions. The questionnaire for the instructors and guidance personnel is focused on guidance programmes, guidance personnel/instructors qualifications, their training and competence as well as how career guidance and quality education are linked. The questionnaires for students gathered information about support offered to students in their career development including information on self-awareness, career knowledge, career decision-making, career planning, integration of self-knowledge and career information, job hunting skills and career maturity as it is related to quality education.

Prior to using the questionnaires for the main study, questionnaires were administered to 30 instructors and 60 students and item analysis was used to determine the reliabilities of items. Item analysis was also used to

identify and retain relevant and effective items while at the same time exclude items which might be irrelevant. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine internal reliability coefficients or whether constituent items are measuring the same domain (Jack & Clarke, 1998). All the constructs found to have high reliabilities as their reliabilities exceed 0.80. This indicates that the instruments provide dependable information from which reliable conclusions can be made.

2.4 Data collection

The questionnaires were applied at two colleges by the researcher. The questionnaire for students was completed during 50-minute class periods and the questionnaire for instructors was completed at their home or office. In order to obtain honest responses, consent letters were attached to each questionnaire and the respondents were instructed not to write their names on the questionnaires. Student participants received instructions on how to complete the surveys for the first five minutes of the classes.

2.5 Data analysis

The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 was used in the analysis of data. The analysis of data was done by calculating percentages. These

summarised responses were used to interpret the data and draw conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Students' perception of the effectiveness of career guidance programme

The effectiveness of guidance program was evaluated by students in terms of the supports and information including backing students in self-awareness (personal development, aptitude and interest), career knowledge, career decision-making, career planning, integrating self-knowledge and career information and job hunting skills. Their responses are summarized in Table 1.

It is emerged from the results that students were not supported in self-awareness (personal development, aptitude and interest), career knowledge, career decision-making, career planning, integrating self-knowledge and career information that determine educational choice and decision on career paths, job hunting skills and transition skills. These aspects of career guidance were not used to ensure students' career development and quality of education. Accordingly, 62.32% of the students in the two colleges felt that they have not received adequate support and information regarding their personal

development, aptitude and interest mainly due to the absence of guidance curriculum package.

Regarding career knowledge, the majority of the students (61.14%) reported that they have not received adequate support and information using diverse sources of career information such as from printed, ICT-based, professionals and employers. They were also not informed about advantages and disadvantages of a range of jobs, job requirements of different occupations, how to evaluate and use labor market information, the financial output of different occupations and potential for advancement in different occupations.

Smaller proportion (31.92%) of the respondents replied that they received support and information on career decision-making. More than half of the students (52.47%) reported that they have not received support and information regarding career decision-making. This means that students did not get support in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of different jobs and factors to be considered in career decision-making like, for example, the impact of career decisions on oneself and others, how to make decision during career transitions and how to overcome situation interfering with career decisions.

Table 1. Summary of students' perception of the effectiveness of career guidance in their career development

| No. | Construct | N | DD/DS (%) | Average UD (%) | AS/DA (%) |
|-----|---|-----|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | In your college, you have received support and information regarding: | | | | |
| 1 | Self-awareness. | 190 | 62.32 | 14.56 | 23.07 |
| 2 | Career knowledge. | 190 | 61.14 | 13.18 | 25.67 |
| 3 | Career decision-making. | 190 | 52.47 | 15.64 | 31.92 |
| 4 | Career planning. | 190 | 55.48 | 16.98 | 27.52 |
| 5 | Integration of self-knowledge and career information. | 190 | 50.12 | 18.20 | 31.68 |
| 6 | Job hunting skills. | 190 | 61.14 | 13.18 | 25.67 |
| 7 | Career maturity. | 190 | 62.32 | 15.56 | 22.07 |
| | Average | | 57.76 | 15.35 | 26.91 |

Note that DD/ DS= definitely disagree/disagree somewhat, UD=Undecided and AS/ DA= Agree somewhat/Definitely agree.

Smaller number of students (27.52%) indicated that they have received support and information on career development and 16.98% are not sure. However, 55.48% of the students agreed that they have not obtained adequate support and information concerning career planning at their colleges.

Pertaining to support and information in integrating self-knowledge and career information, half of the students (50.12%) reported that they have not received adequate support and information, 18.2% of them are not sure and 31.68% felt that they received support and information in integrating self-knowledge and career information compatible with their personalities, aptitudes and interests. Although the positive response (31.68%) shows the presence of promising scenario, a

considerable number of respondents (18.2%) who remained undecided or showed their disagreement (50.12%) indicate the presence of gap in support and information in integrating self-knowledge and career information.

Regarding job hunting skills, 61.14% of the respondents indicated that at their college, there were not classes/lectures they attended that helped them on job-search activities such as job-search skills, job-application, preparing résumé (CVs), and preparing for selection interviews. Due to lack of job hunting skills, they do not know what employers look for in relation to behaviour at work, how to do network with potential employers, how to find job online, at an employment agency or by networking, newspaper, private employers or job search support groups. They could not also develop the

feeling that when one door closes, another opens.

As to career maturity, 62.32% showed that they lack career maturity because they indicated that they do not know which kind of work to choose, the possibility to be successful in different occupations, the need to take a job that is not their first choice sometimes, the influence of other on their career choice, about requirements of jobs and the need to make informed decision. Lack of career maturity indicates the absence of guidance curriculum that assist students to make informed career choice, factors to consider in career choice and how to look for different career options.

In general, the majority of the students agreed that career guidance was not systematically designed and used to enhance students' career development and there is a trend to send students without ensuring their career maturity indicative of educational quality crisis and

difficulty in obtaining goal oriented behaviours with employability skills.

3.1.2 Guidance personnel/instructors perception of the effectiveness of career guidance programme

Guidance personnel/instructors perception of the effectiveness of career guidance programme was evaluated from the perspective of the presence or absence of career guidance policy (written or unwritten), action plan, career education, stakeholders' involvement and career model. The presence or absence of the four factors is summarized in Table 2.

With regard to career guidance policy guideline, about 73% of the respondents indicated that there is no career guidance policy guideline in their colleges. Their colleges have no clear career guidance policy /guideline to give its students the tools and knowledge to realistically plan for their future career and budget which meant for career guidance.

Table 2. Presence or absence of career guidance policy guideline, action plan, career education, stakeholders' involvement and career model

| No. | Construct | N | Present (%) | Absent (%) | Undecided (%) |
|-----|----------------------------------|----|-------------|------------|---------------|
| 1 | Career guidance policy guideline | 95 | 2.86 | 73.10 | 23.94 |
| 2 | Action plan | 95 | 6.67 | 56.67 | 36.67 |
| 3 | Career education | 95 | 7.01 | 79.81 | 12.32 |
| 4 | Stakeholders' involvement | 95 | 1.86 | 73.10 | 24.94 |
| 5 | Career model | 95 | 4.80 | 75.2 | 20.05 |
| | Average | | 4.64 | 71.576 | 23.584 |

Regarding action plan, about 57% of the respondents indicated absence of action plan. There is no systematically

planned and organised guidance programmes focusing on academic, career and personal-social development.

They felt that the objectives were not prioritised with time frame into immediate (1 year), short-term (5 to 10 years) and long term tasks for its accomplishment. Strategies were not devised to deliver career interventions, the responsibilities of stakeholders were not identified and means to evaluate the successes and failures of guidance programmes were also not established.

Concerning career education, the majority (80%) of guidance personnel/instructors agreed that there was no career education received by students in their colleges. Attention was not given to students' understanding of their interests, abilities, the requirements of various occupations through systematic reflection of workplace environment and active on job participation.

Similarly, from the open-ended questions it was found that there is no career guidance and career education for the students. Educational and vocational choices are more of the result of pressure from unqualified individuals such as peers, parents and significant others.

3.1.3 Resources and facilities

The two colleges' guidance personnel reported scarcity of equipments and materials (facilities) such as computer, printer, telephone, shelve, filing cabinet, modem and internet, photocopier, fax and scanner. There are also lack of audio and visual, psychometric tests, handbooks, bulletins and magazines which are necessary to run guidance and

counselling services properly. The opening of the office is in name only. The implication is that scant attention is given to guidance and counselling services by the two colleges' management.

3.1.4 Link between career guidance and education

Instructors' were asked to rate the contribution of career guidance to make the education system work thereby improve quality education. Their responses are summarized in Table 3.

On average, 62% of the respondents designated that career guidance is not in place to enhance quality education. However, 25% of the respondents have the view that it is serving the purpose. On the other hand, 13% of the respondents are not sure whether career guidance is supporting in achieving quality of education.

More specifically, guidance service at the two colleges is not used as a mechanism for making the education system work. It is not contributing to improve the efficiency of the education system by reducing attrition rate; helping students make the appropriate choices from among different departments and career pathways; promoting a closer link between education and work by enabling young people to gain the knowledge and skills required in the world of work, and communication skills, teamwork, creativity, etc. that are increasingly required by employers.

Table 3. Instructors' view about the contribution of career guidance to quality education

| No | Item | N | Average | | |
|----|--|----|-----------|--------|-----------|
| | | | DD/DS (%) | UD (%) | AS/DA (%) |
| 1 | Guidance services in your college contributed to improve the efficiency of the education system by: | | | | |
| | (a) Reducing attrition rate. | 95 | 69% | 23% | 8% |
| | (b) Helping students make the appropriate choices from among different departments/ career pathways. | 95 | 53% | 13% | 34% |
| | (c) Promoting more in-depth learning by using experiential learning approaches. | 95 | 51% | 13% | 36% |
| 2 | Guidance services in your college promoted a tighter link between education and work by: | | | | |
| | (a) Teaching students about work, either directly through extra-curricular seminars or through a timetabled career education programme; or indirectly, by providing resources to regular instructors who address work-related issues in the subjects they teach. | 95 | 47% | 18% | 35% |
| | (b) Providing a structured exposure to work for learning purposes through entrepreneurship schemes, and work shadowing or work experience programmes. | 95 | 70% | 21% | 9% |
| | (c) Promoting 'soft skills' such as communication skills, teamwork, creativity that are increasingly required by employers. | 95 | 62% | 9% | 29% |
| 3 | The guidance service at your college enabled young people to gain the knowledge and skills required in the world of work | 95 | 65% | 5% | 30% |
| 4 | Career guidance in your college enhanced quality education by: | | | | |
| | A. Producing students having goal directed behaviour. | 95 | 61% | 10% | 29% |
| | B. Helping students to acquire knowledge and attitudes about self, work and other life options. | 95 | 65% | 12% | 22% |
| | C. Helping students acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to make work a meaningful, productive and satisfying part of their life. | 95 | 77% | 14% | 9% |
| | D. Enhancing self-understanding of students related to education and the world of work. | 95 | 76% | 9% | 15% |
| | E. Setting achievable goals in academic and career paths. | 95 | 56% | 9% | 35% |

| | | | | |
|---|----|-----|-----|-----|
| F. Enhancing competitiveness or employability skills. | 95 | 53% | 13% | 34% |
| G. Making informed decision. | 95 | 62% | 16% | 22% |
| Average | | 62% | 13% | 25% |

It is also noted that students were not properly assisted to set achievable goals in academic and career paths and they were not taught about work either directly through extra-curricular seminars or through a timetabled career education programme; or indirectly, by providing resources to regular instructors who address work-related issues in the subjects they teach to enhance self-understanding of students related to education and the world of work, and their competitiveness or employability skills. Besides lack of supportive activities in their college there is also inadequate structured exposure to work for learning purposes through entrepreneurship schemes, and work shadowing or work experience programmes outside of the colleges.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Students' perception of the effectiveness of career guidance, guidance programme, support and information in their institutions

The study revealed that students were not sufficiently supported in self-awareness, career knowledge, career decision-making and career planning. Consistent with this study, Lairio and Penttinen (2006) also identified that there are challenges facing career guidance in higher education. Students are making

little thinking about their future career and forthcoming transition from college/university to working life. There is a need to assist students in prioritising alternatives and select occupation (e.g., Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Sharf, 2006), plan career guidance and assign skilled counsellors (Heppner & Johnston, 1989; Stead & Watson, 1998) to avoid students' state of confusion, indecisiveness, non-involvement in the career development process, non-orientation towards work, dependence when making career choices and non-compromise when the preferred careers are difficult to attain.

3.2.2 Guidance personnel/instructors' perception of the effectiveness of career guidance and guidance programme in their institutions

Concerning guidance personnel /instructors background, the study revealed that the majority of the participants were inadequately participated in pre and in-service training related to career guidance. This indicates that the majority of them are not ready to provide effective guidance service because they do not have relevant training in guidance and counselling. However, Nykänen et al. (2007) in European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2009) underscored that instructors should be

able to play a significant role in helping individuals with their career plans and choices that require relevant training.

It also emerged from the study that small amount of time is devoted to career guidance. Similarly, from studies, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004) pointed out that career guidance is not always provided on a full-time specialist basis by people who have specialized and officially recognized qualifications. The career guidance workforce often includes many but as a teacher, psychologist, counsellor, human resource specialist, employment officer or labour-market analyst whose primary occupational identity is not as a career guidance specialist. Often they provide career guidance for only part of their working time.

Regarding action plan, the study disclosed that there is lack of well-planned and organized guidance programmes that prioritized tasks with time frame into immediate, short-term and long term for its accomplishment. Consistent with these findings, Heppner and Johnston (1993) found that career counsellors could not plan, prioritize, monitor and review the programme because it is given little prominence and counselling is relegated to least skilled counsellors and too often career counselling centres do not have their vision. Similarly, Chireshe (2006) identified that the majority of the Zimbabwean counsellors do not produce plans for the guidance and counselling services.

As to career education, it emerged from this study that there was no career

education that enhance relationship between education, work and society in the selected colleges. The focus was on theories rather than basic skills, decision-making, career planning, job-seeking, job-getting and job holding skills. Consistent with finding in this study, Hansen (2006) posited that the problem of career education is severe in tertiary education of low and middle-income countries.

In this study, it was found that there is no relevant career model used in the selected colleges. Consistent with this study, O'Neil, McWhirter and Cerezo (2008) found that major difficulties facing career counselling professionals is the lack of contextualizing existing theories to local situation and variant individuals. On the contrary, international literature (e.g., Kato & Suzuki, 2006) showed that career guidance requires a set of theoretical frameworks having not only universal validity and applications that address the needs of different students, but also culture-specific models that could be used at a local level.

3.2.3 The contribution of career guidance to quality education

In spite of the need for career guidance to ensure quality education, improve students' academic achievement, and reduce attrition rate, the present study found that career guidance is not primed to enhance quality education. Students were not assisted in educational and vocational choice by setting achievable goals in academic and career paths which are useful in having goal directed

behavior. In addition, students were not taught about work either through extra-curricular activities, structured entrepreneurship schemes; work shadowing outside of the colleges or as integrated part of courses that helps in ensuring quality education. Moreover, career guidance is not in place to increase the efficiency of education by reducing attrition rate, enhancing competitiveness/employability skills and promoting soft skills such as communication skills, teamwork and creativity.

Consistent with this study, Chireshe (2006), and Debono, Camiller, Galea and Gravina (2007) found that the existing guidance concentrate on personal or study/academic guidance rather than ensuring students' career development that in turn contribute to quality education.

In general, consistent with the result of this study, from empirical study, Rivera and Schaefer (2009) pointed out that relatively more emphasis is given to academic, personal-social development and thus career guidance tends to be marginalised. As a result, students were not assisted in a way to understand themselves, explore the labour market which enables them to make appropriate match between themselves and the opportunities in the labour market, and career guidance is not contributing to enhance quality education in the studied two colleges.

4. Conclusions

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the provision of career guidance services in the two colleges is

thin on the ground to keep in touch with the ever-changing social and economic changes, demand of students and the world of work. Aspects of effective and comprehensive career guidance services are awfully inadequate. These aspects include planning, career education, facilities, competent professionals, and involvement of stakeholders, career model and eventually students' career development. Even though there are some useful points of departure, the status of career guidance services in the two colleges is far below the expected international standard. It can also be concluded that career guidance service in the two colleges is not contributing to quality education as students were not assisted in educational and vocational choice, learning by doing through extra-curricular activities, structured entrepreneurship schemes and work shadowing outside of the colleges that ultimately increase the efficiency of education by reducing attrition rate, enhancing competitiveness/ employability skills and promoting soft skills such as communication skills, teamwork and creativity which are required by employers.

The conclusions reached above necessitate specific recommendations; these are now made.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings from the literature study, empirical investigation and conclusion the following recommendations are proposed whereby career guidance may be addressed

effectively so as to enhance quality of education.

- Ethiopian Ministry of Education needs to start to develop public policies on career development and allocate resources to the development of career guidance services at all levels of education. Specific policy guidelines also need to be established at institutional level that recognize the interaction among educational, personal-social and vocational guidance in addition to the contexts such as, cultural background, psychosocial environment and unique assets of individuals.
- There is a need for systematic and quality career guidance and counselling service framed within well thought and contextualized career guidance model to ensure quality education and accessible to all students in each college.
- Alternative strategies need to be designed either to offer career guidance through general orientation at all levels of education, infuse career guidance across the curriculum or provide through seminars, workshops and counselling sessions in order to

assist students to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to manage their career more effectively and to ensure quality of education.

- There is a need to replace informal, unsystematic and unscientific guidance by more formal, systematic and scientific career guidance by training counsellors and train instructors with guidance and counselling theories, career development theories and practices that is followed by continuous professional development.
- Finally, a national survey by ministry of education that includes colleges from different regions, including parents, alumni, top management of the colleges and industries/ organizations is recommended.

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