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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Career Guidance and Counselling in the Establishment of Vocational Education in Tanzanian Secondary Schools: Influence on Students' Subject Choice and Career Pathways

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Author's Contributions

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a systematic literature review on career guidance and counseling services in secondary schools: its development and implementation, considering the establishment of vocational education in secondary schools. The review found that career guidance and counseling are inadequately implemented due to structural and institutional challenges. The review analyzes empirical studies that were published between 2015 and 2025 using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) Framework. This review found that career guidance and counseling services are inadequately implemented due to structural and institutional challenges, including the absence of trained personnel, inadequate facilities and materials, limited time allocation and lack of clear operational guidelines. These challenges reduce the effectiveness of career guidance and counseling in secondary schools. Strengthening career guidance and counseling process is therefore essential to support students' academic and career development and to align educational with national vocational goals. It is therefore recommended that, teachers should receive continuous professional training in career guidance and counseling, adequate institutional support and clear policies and that appropriate guidelines be developed and enforced by relevant educational authorities.

Keywords: Career guidance and counseling; vocational education; students subject selection and career pathway

INTRODUCTION

Career guidance and counseling are essential services that support individuals in beginning, changing, or advancing their careers. The process helps individuals to understand themselves their interests, abilities, aptitudes, values and limitations, while also enabling them to make informed decision about education, careers and overall well-being. Globally, effective career guidance system are structured and integrated within school-based curricula with strong collaboration

between educational stakeholders. (Skolverket, 2024), (Amat, 2019), and (Vintere & Balode, 2016). Career guidance begins early and continues at all levels of education. All emphasis based on helping students develop self-awareness, understanding educational and labour market opportunities and the ability to make informed career decisions. Trained counsellors and teachers play a central role ensuring career guidance is systematic and aligned with students' academic pathway and future employment options.

In Tanzania despite recognition of the importance of career guidance and counseling in national education policies, implementation at school level remains limited. Many secondary schools lack trained guidance and counseling personnel and where services exist, they are often informal and inconsistent. Angelista (2018), (Msangi and Mwila, 2024) observe that most secondary school teachers have limited knowledge of career guidance due to its absence in teacher training programs. This review thus aims to consolidate literature (2015-2025) on how career guidance and counseling developed and implemented in vocational secondary schools.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Literature Review

This review is guided by Hollands' theory of vocational career choice (1973) and Super's theory of career development. The theories together explain issues in the area of career development. Hollands' theory explains the environment that emphasizes individual choice, self-expression and personal traits and occupational environment, this is emphasized by Supers' theory (1957) as the lifespan career development developed in different life stages. Career and education satisfaction are affected by the interests of each individuals. Holland theory helps clients to discover their interest and personality type and help them to match into the same type of environment (Zainudin et al 2020).

Secondary school students are in the exploration stage of career development. The effectiveness of career guidance and counselling in secondary schools is to empower students to recognize their abilities, gaining skills in various subjects and align their interests accordingly. This in turn can enable them to focus on particular subjects, enhance their performance, and pursue courses aligned with their career aspiration after competing secondary education.

Empirical Literature Review

Career decision making is perceived to be a key output of career guidance and counseling among students at all levels of education with support from teachers, counsellors, professionals, the private sector, old students, and other government officials (Anne et al. 2018). Career preferences begin to develop in childhood and are influenced by parents, teachers and the quality of career information that children receive through socialization (Amani 2022). Career guidance and counseling in secondary schools plays a vital role

in supporting students' subject selection, vocational aspirations and career decision-making. The role of teachers in career and employability learning is further emphasized by Hooley et al (2015) and Zeb et al (2021), who argue that teachers have the potential to drive meaningful change in the education system because they serve as role models for students, identify career aspirations and abilities, assist in the subject selection and provide career guidance.

In Tanzania studies by Chilewa & Osaki (2022), found that many teachers appointed as school guidance counselors lacked professional training and were often selected based on traits such as being friendly or disciplined, rather than relevant professional skills. As a result, students view guidance and counseling mainly as a tool for discipline rather than career support. Angelista (2018), and Mabula & Edina (2015) revealed that most of the teachers in secondary schools have little knowledge concerning career guidance and counselling; also the findings showed that teachers have little knowledge about other professions so they provide little or no guidance to their students. Alloph and Msonge (2023) have noted that despite the government's effort to promote career guidance, most secondary schools struggle with the provision of structured services. Teacher-counselors often lack the necessary training and recourses to offer effective guidance. Therefore in school setting students are not guided in selecting their options subjects and they found themselves in wrong subject combination or studying to become what they don't want to be. However the introduction of vocational education in secondary schools aims to equip students with knowledge and skills that help them to fit into world of work. Lubawa et al (2021) have revealed that the effective career guidance and counseling services also improve students' performance, since the students are aware of what they want to become; this motivate their studying spirit so that they can achieve what they desire. Career guidance and counseling are essential designed to assist students in making informed decision about their educational and professional futures.

Filipishyn (2024), emphasise the necessity of developing both technical and social skills to facilitate successful labor market entry, providing individuals with information about careers and the world of work, aiding secondary school students in selecting appropriate subjects that align with their future career aspirations. Moreover, empirical studies by various scholars have

shown that the career guidance and counseling program in secondary schools as the bridge to world of work is very important in teaching and learning process yet have challenges that hinder its implementation. In Uganda, students face difficulty during career transition between different levels of education and employment despite government policies about implementation of career guidance and counseling services (Otwine et al 2022). Despite its importance, research reveals significant gaps in students' awareness and access to effective career guidance (Crisan et al 2015). In Tanzania Mwalukisa, & Mwila, (2025) shows the challenges of implementing guidance and counseling services, such as little knowledge on guidance and counseling teachers, lack of counseling room, lack of clear rules and guidelines: this is supported by Kazimoto, (2022), Guidance and counseling services in secondary schools do not exist due to the fact that the infrastructure and aspects related to guidance and counseling services do not exist in most schools. The vocational education approach needs to enhance learners into practical skills that builds there experience and engagement. Alloph, & Tibategeza, (2022) observed that poor career guidance and counselling services in secondary schools, lead secondary school leavers to join unplanned professional training since it did not contribute to the students choices of future professional training.

Most studies recognize career guidance and counseling in secondary schools as a critical element in preparing students for life beyond school. In developed countries such as the United State, Canada, and parts of Europe, career guidance is institutionalized within school systems and often delivered by trained professionals or school counselors. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2021), effective career guidance and counselling program in these countries are characterized by structured activities integration into the curriculum, digital platforms, and collaboration with industry stakeholders. According to Anene and Onah (2020), most secondary schools across Sub-Sahara Africa lack structured career guidance programs, and the responsibility is often informally assigned to teachers with no professional background in counselling. This supported by Otwine et al,(2022) from Uganda.

The insights from this review highlight the contribution of empirical evidence from Tanzania as supported by international reviews indicating that making career decisions is a lifelong process which requires the

exploration of the world of work in relation to individuals' abilities, interests, skills and values Super (1957). Career decision-making begins from early childhood when children start thinking about and developing their initial career interests and continues throughout one's life-span (Amani, 2016; Magee et al, 2025).

The empirical insights from this review highlight the importance of career guidance and counseling in enhancing student's career choice and academic planning in secondary school in Tanzania, there is limited research on how these services are actually being implemented at the school level, Little has been documented about students' levels of awareness, utilization and extent of implementation of career guidance and counselling services within vocational secondary schools. This gap is of great significance because understanding the practical execution of career guidance is essential for improving their effectiveness in implementation of secondary education into its category; general secondary and vocational secondary curriculum and informing educational policy and resource allocation

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Search Strategy and Sources

A comprehensive search was conducted across multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), African Journals Online (AJOL). Boolean search terms combined concepts related to career guidance, vocational education, secondary schools, subject choice, and career pathways. The review focused on studies published between (2015) and (2025) and written in English.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they addressed career guidance and counselling in secondary or vocational education, examined teachers, students, or institutional systems, and provided empirical or policy-based evidence relevant to the objectives. Focusing mainly on Tanzania or comparable sub-Saharan contexts, focused on secondary education. Exclusion criteria included studies that lack empirical data, Studies focusing non-career-related counselling, studies that lack career guidance and counselling.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Relevant data for this review were systematically extracted from each included study using a structured data extraction form. The information that were extracted included; Author(s) and year of publication;

country and study context; research design and methods; study population and sample characteristics; primarily focus on career guidance and counseling in primary and secondary school; key findings related to career guidance and counselling; implications for vocational education and career decision-making. The data base yield 371 titles, abstract were screened. 47 articles were assessed for eligibility, resulting in 15 studies included in the final analysis. The PRISMA 2020 and Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT) version 2018 was used to rate the methodological quality of the 15 studies that were included. The author independently

applied the appropriate MMAT screening questions (five per study type), studies meet 4-5 criteria were classified as high quality, 3 criteria as medium quality and 2-1 criteria as low quality. No study was excluded on the basis of quality.

After data extraction, analysis was done using thematic analysis under the narrative synthesis framework. Extracted data were organized and analyzed based on the three objectives. Then, similar findings were grouped to identify recurring themes, patterns and divergence across the literatures

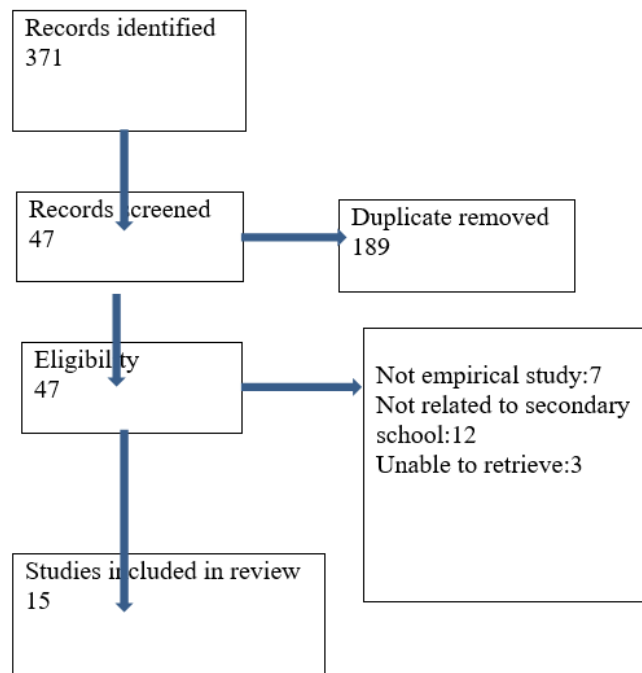


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020: Flow diagram for systematic review

Table 1. Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool

Author(s) & Year	Title	Study Design	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 5	Overall Quality Judgment
Mwakalinga, S. E. (2025).	Prospects and Challenges of Learners' Early Specialization in Tanzanian Secondary Schools Education: Evidence from Stakeholders' Voices.	Qualitative	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Can't tell	Moderate
Chilewa, E.	The	Mixed	Yes	Can't	Yes	Yes	Can't	Moderate

A., & Osaki, K. (2022).	Effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling Practices on Students' Career Development in Secondary Schools in Temeke Municipality	Embedded		tell			tell	e
Angelista, J. L. (2018).	Challenges facing secondary school teachers in implementing career guidance and its implication on the student's future job choices in Tanzania. A case of selected secondary schools in Kilimanjaro region	Mixed method, Descriptive survey	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Moderate
Lubawa, D., Ngirwa, C., & Shavega, T. (2021).	Perceived Influence of Career Guidance and Counselling Services on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance: A Case of Tanga City, Tanzania	Mixed method	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	High
Mwalukisa, G. M., & Mwila, P. M. (2025).	Importance & Impact Of Guidance & Counseling Programme In The School Curriculum: A study conducted in public secondary schools of Kinondoni Municipality in Tanzania.	Mixed method	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	Moderate
Kazimoto, M. R. (2022).	The Prevalence of Guidance and Counseling Services in Public and	Cros-sectional survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High

	Private Secondary Schools in Tanzania								
Alloph, J. M., & Tibategeza, E. (2022).	The Contribution of Career Guidance Service in Public Secondary Schools towards Professional Training: A Case of Magu District, Mwanza	Mixed method	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Can't tell	Moderate	
Ntawigaya, N. (2021).	The choice of subject combinations among students in secondary schools and the quest of future careers among graduates in Tanzania	Mixed method	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	High	
Mabula, N., & Edna, K. (2015)	Is It Not Now?: School Counselors' Training in Tanzania Secondary Schools	Mixed method	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	High	
Amani, J. (2022)	Career preparation of primary school pupils in Tanzania. <i>Papers in Education and Development</i>	Quantitative	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High	
Charles, L., Rupia, C., & Onyango, D. (2023).	Assessing career guidance and counseling activities that foster career awareness among students in public secondary schools in Misungwi District.	Mixed method	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Yes	High	

Critical Appraisal Summary (MMAT, 2018)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Knowledge of Career Guidance and Counseling

Findings from reviewed studies indicate that many

schools lack trained career guidance and counseling teachers, and instead assign teachers to perform guidance and counseling role without adequate preparation, Chilewa and Osaki (2022). As a result, most teachers possess limited knowledge of career

guidance, this seems to be missing in their professional training. Furthermore, teachers have insufficient knowledge about other professions, which limits their ability to provide guidance to students, (Angelista 2018); Mabula & Edina 2015). Similarly in the study of Charles et al (2023) revealed that some schools provided career guidance and counseling services, the majority of these activities were not closely aligned with career guidance and counseling, the research recommends the enhancement of career guidance and counseling services through the employment of professional counselors and the provision of seminars, workshops, and training for teacher counselors in schools. This lack of expertise hinders the proper application of career development theory which developed by John Holland the theory of vocational choice. Holland's theory (1973) of vocational choice involves assessing individuals based on prominent personality types and matching them with the environmental aspects of potential careers. The theory suggest that the higher level of congruence between individual and occupational characteristics, leads to positive career outcome, including satisfaction, persistence, and achievement. Therefore, inadequate teacher knowledge restricts students' opportunities to explore their interest early, understand their strengths and make informed subject choices.

Students' Awareness of Career Guidance and Counseling Services

Students awareness of career guidance and counseling services in secondary schools remain low, which negatively affects their subject and career choices. A study by Angelista (2018) revealed that students were not given guidance when selecting optional subject, they found themselves in wrong combination or studying. Similarly, many secondary school students do not receive adequate information about career choice, which create challenge when they are required to select the higher secondary school subjects. Study by Alloph and Tibategeza (2022) and Ntawigaya (2021) found that secondary school leaver often joined unplanned professional training programme that do not align with their future career interests due to a lack of proper guidance. Ntawigaya (2021) further recommended that students should be an orientation on subject choices in relation to future careers when they enter secondary schools. In line with the government's vision of introducing vocational education, effective career guidance and counseling services are essential to equip learners with relevant skills and abilities. Through

guidance and counseling students gain self-awareness which help them choose subject that match their interests and motivation, enabling them to fit effectively into their real working environment.

Implementation of Career Guidance and Counseling Services

Reviewed studies indicate that some of the teachers apply knowledge of guidance and counselling to provide career related services to students, others are not aware of the importance and existence of career guidance service within the school (Angelista, 2018). In Tanzania the education system introduced guidance and counseling services to students to cut across the learning process and support students' career aspiration. However, the implementation of career guidance and counseling services faces numerous challenges, Previous studies reported a lack of professional training on career guidance, limited teachers knowledge, inadequate cooperation among the students and teachers, absence of counseling office, insufficient support from stakeholders. Additional challenges include limited teaching and learning materials, shortage of time in school for extra-curricular activities, absence of clear rules and guidelines to support effective implementation (Lubawa et al, 2021, Chilewa and Osaki 2022, Mwalukisa and Mwila, 2025, Mwakalinga, 2025 and Angelista 2018; Alloph, 2023). These challenges hinder the effective delivery of career guidance and counseling services in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This review has found that career guidance and counseling services are inadequately implemented in most secondary schools due to structural and institutional challenges, including the absence of trained personnel, in adequate facilities and materials, limited time allocation and lack of clear operational guidelines. These challenges reduce the effectiveness of career guidance and counseling in secondary schools. The national goal for establishment of vocational education aims to introduce vocational education at earlier stages of schooling to promote employability and self-reliance.

Strengthening career guidance and counseling is therefore essential to support students' academic and career development and align educational with national vocational goals. It was therefore recommended that, teachers should have continuous professional training in career guidance and counseling, adequate

institutional support and clear policies and guidelines be developed and enforced by relevant educational authorities. Among key areas that counseling teachers need support include facilities and career guidance and counseling materials. Further research on the training needs will benefit program developers and trainers who will be able to transform unprofessional counsellors into professional and supporting counselling teams for schools.

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