

IMPACT OF SKEWED COUNSELLING AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL ON VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Vocational and Technical Education forms a very key foundation in enabling a nation to achieve aspired Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. Kenya as a country highly depends on technical skills to achieve The Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. This can only be achieved through proper and realistic career counseling information provided by the counseling teachers at secondary school level. According to KCSE results released every year, majority of the candidates score below grade C+ but above D which is the requirements for entrance at Diploma and Craft levels. However, majority of students do not join Vocational or Technical Education due to a missing link between the natures of career counseling services offered at secondary school level. Counselors has expectations that majority of the candidates will join trainings at university levels thus package their counseling information on the few ignoring other students. The objective behind this study was to examine the final results scored by students and the subject choice at secondary school, various career theories and models that guide career choices formed foundation for the study. The study used a descriptive design where data was collected through past existing data review from KNEC and one Technical Training Institute over a period of four years. Data was analyzed and presented in tables and figures. Findings revealed that majority of the candidates (80.33%) scored less than C+ and had no career information on Vocational and Technical Education. Secondary career guidance is also biases towards university education thus acting as a catalyst to kill students' careers at lower levels entry.

Keywords: Career Guidance and Counseling, Vocational and Technical Education

INTRODUCTION

Kenya aspire to be a middle-income country by the year 2030 through the country's blueprint of The Vision 2030 providing a high quality of life to all its citizens. Included in the Vision is the Social Pillar which outlines the country's education that aims at producing a well-trained and skilled labour force at all terminals levels of education that will enable the country achieve its aspirations (UNESCO, 1961: p. 4). Various sectors envision include; Agriculture, ICT, Manufacturing/Industry, Education and Finance. In manufacturing the blueprint envisages a newly industrialized country, powered by a high-skilled workforce (GoK 2005). To get a skilled manpower as envisioned; there has to be world class training and proper and deliberate career guidance given to students. To be industrialized Sifuna (1992) argue that Kenya needs to have a pool of people with vocational and technical skills to work in various sectors of the economy. However, there are various challenges facing provision of technical and vocational education training in Kenya. Aduda (2003) reckon that to begin with, career teachers have a bias against technical courses because they believe that they are of low value than professional courses which promise a higher paying job as well as a higher social status. For example his study revealed that one would rather be a teacher or a tout than a carpenter or a mechanic. This is against the expectations of the concluded global Millennium Development Goals

(MDG) and the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). From the worldwide perspective, there has been an observed positive relationship between the quality and quantity of human capital in terms of skills and knowledge and development and growth in the world economies. Past studies and reports by ILO associate mass knowledge and skills to economic growth and development of a country. Mbwale (2004) reckon that development of a country depends on the developmental level of its people.

The objective behind the Social Pillar of The Kenya Vision 2030 therefore is to guide the nation in the investing in the people of Kenya in order to be more productive through pursuance of the right skills, careers and professions at various levels. The country has made big strides in the education sector by offering Free Primary Education (FPE) since 2003 and Free Secondary Education (FSE) from 2008 with an aim that those students will ferry the country to attainment of improved quality of life for all Kenyans. The transition rate has increased from 48.02% in 2009 to 79.41% in 2015.

This paper is a critical review of the effects of the career counseling services offered at the secondary school level in Kenya. This is because as it has been observed by Aduda (2003) and Government of Kenya (2005), there has been a great discrepancy between the country's expectations and aspiration and the

reality on the ground and between the National budgetary allocation on education and the output. Transition rate from primary level to secondary level has been growing gradually (GoK, 1999). Those who progress to secondary level, majority end up scoring grade C and below. The study therefore explores the short comings or biasness introduced by secondary school career counselors or the counseling services based on the fact that majority of the students do not end up pursuing university education (Nyarangi, 2011). Good career counseling should be based on facts. This fact notwithstanding, the main focus of many counselors is concentrated on the higher achievers ignoring the masses yet a very small percentage end up scoring the minimum university entry requirements.

As noted during selection of subject at Form Two, the students are required to select between sciences and art based subjects, school counselor advice the students to choose “easy” and art based subjects at the expense of sciences especially Physics which is assumed to be difficult for average students. This is done without considering that the science subjects form the foundation for most vocational and technical courses area where the bulk of students belong. This results to wrong choices of subjects’ where students are encouraged to choose boosters subjects which do not prepare them for any future careers based on their final performance. Career guidance should be balanced or skewed towards the majority who end up pursuing careers in vocation and technical education where majority of the courses are science based (Gibson and Mitchell, 2008).

A study by Ayiah-Mensah (2014) noted that technical and vocational education prepares an individual for self-reliance and that this type of educations is among the key essential tools an individual can use to develop him or herself as well as the community. For a country whose population growth is faster than the economic growth, technical and vocational education should be the interest of end result. This is because it provides educational training for useful employment in trade, agriculture, industries, homemaking and business which is the foundation through which economic growth and development is based (Republic of Kenya, 2014). Basically, technical and vocational training aims at strengthening the skills base of an individual for production of goods and services for society.

Statement of the Problem

The country’s’ human potential can only be unleashed through proper career information provided through career counseling service in the

education process. This can best be done at secondary school level since the learners are mature enough to understand career world unlike the primary school. In Kenya, this has been a challenge that has lingered for a long time and has affected students in their career choice later in life as they leave school without proper guidance. The nature of the counseling offered concentrate more on the students who are presumed likely to join university ignoring majority of the students’ population. The problem is even compounded by the fact that most of the Vocational and Technical Education offers courses that are science based including physics yet most students failed to select the subject due to biased in career counseling. This paper is an argument against the current career counseling base on past records.

Research Objective

To establish the impact of career counseling services at secondary school level in Kenya.

Theoretical Review

Career guidance and development is a “continuous lifelong process of developmental experiences that focuses on seeking, obtaining and processing information about self, occupational and educational alternatives, life styles and role options” (Sang et al., 2012). Career guidance can only flourish in an environment where proper career guidance has laid good foundation during school life. It can also be explained as the process through which people come to understand themselves as they relate to the world of work and their role in it. Career development process is where an individual fashions a work identity and prepare accordingly.

Parsons' Theory

Frank Parsons developed the idea of matching careers to talents, skills and personality. People perform best when they are in jobs best suited to their abilities. Frank Parsons is regarded as the founder of the vocational guidance movement. He developed the talent-matching approach, which was later developed into the Trait and Factor Theory of Occupational Choice. At the centre of Parsons' theory is the concept of matching; an accurate understanding of their individual traits (aptitudes, interests, personal abilities), a knowledge of jobs and the labour market and rational and objective judgment about the relationship between their individual traits, and the labour market.

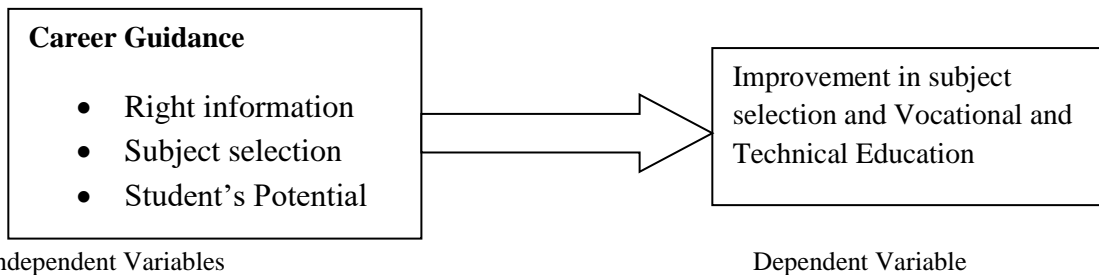
This three-part theory still governs most current practice. The trait and factor theory operates under the premise that it is possible to measure both individual talents and the attributes required in

particular jobs. It also assumes that people may be matched to an occupation that's a good fit. Parsons suggests that when individuals are in jobs best suited to their abilities they perform best and their productivity is highest.

In his book, 'Choosing a Vocation', Parsons maintains that personal counsel is fundamental to the career search. In particular, he notes seven stages for a career counselor to work through with clients: Personal data: create a statement of key facts about the person, remembering to include every fact that has bearing on the vocational problem. Self-analysis: Self-examination is done in private and under the instruction of the counselor. Every tendency and interest that might impact on the choice of a life work should be recorded. The client's own choice and decision: this may show itself in the first two stages. The counselor must bear in mind that the choice of vocation should be made by the client, with the counselor acting as guide. Counselors' analysis: the counselor tests the client's decision to see if it is in

line with the "main quest". Outlook on the vocational field: the counselor should be familiar with industrial knowledge such as lists and classifications of industries and vocations, in addition to locations of training and apprenticeships. Induction and advice: a broad-minded attitude coupled with logical and clear reasoning is critical at this stage. General helpfulness: the counselor helps the client to fit into the chosen work, and to reflect on the decision.

Much of Parsons' work still guides career counseling today, though it is not without criticism. Matching assumes a degree of stability within the labour market. However, the reality is that the market's volatility means individuals must be prepared to change and adapt to their circumstances. These theories notwithstanding career counselors in Kenya are not guided by any theory but base their counseling on the premise that all secondary school students will end up in universities thus skewing their information towards that end.



Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

The Ministry of Education highly depends on career counselors to support and guide secondary schools students with career-related information. Through their expertise in career development and labor markets, they are expected to put a person's potential, attitudes, qualifications, experience, strengths and weakness in a broad perspective while also considering their personal hobbies and interests, location, job market and educational possibilities (Mbwale, 2004). Through their counseling and teaching abilities, career counselors can additionally support people in gaining a better understanding of what really matters for them personally, how they can plan their careers autonomously, or help them in making tough decisions and getting through times of crisis. However, Ayiah-Mensah (2014) noted that most of them concentrate on the few who perform well academically. This implies that majority of the students are not exposed to information relevant to their aspirations and potentials (Aduda, 2003). At the subject selection for example, the assumption is that

all will go to university hence select subject without considering anything. According to policy makers in many countries, career guidance and counseling forms the basis through which human resource capital can be improved. However, due to skewed and biased approach, they have caused death to many students through poor guidance and counselling in subjects and career selection

The Gap

One of the major challenges associated with career counseling is encouraging participants to engage in the process. In Kenyan scenario, career counselors take the whole and assume that the students are ignorant on the choices. In the UK also, 70% of people under 14 say they have had no careers advice while 45% of people over 14 have had no or very poor/limited advice. Furthermore, it is recognized that the giving of career advice is something that is widely spread through a range of formal and informal roles. In addition to career counselors it is also common for psychologists, teachers, managers,

trainers and Human Resources (HR) specialists to give formal support in career choices. Similarly it is also common for people to seek informal support from friends and family around their career choices and to bypass career professionals altogether. Today increasingly people rely on career web portals to seek advice on resume writing and handling interviews; as also to research on various professions and companies. It has even become possible to take vocational assessments online.

METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by positivist philosophy because it heavily depended on the quantitative data collected from existing records. The research design was descriptive and tried to get interpretations from the data that exist from 2009 to 2015 on KCPE and KCSE exams results and the impact to the economy. Data was summarized in tables and percentages and then presented in figures and chart followed by discussion and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Career counseling takes place at secondary school level. Table 1 indicates the trend from 2009 to 2015. These findings comprises of the number of candidates who successfully transits from primary level of education to secondary level. The information is also presented in the figure below.

Table 1: Transitions from primary to secondary

Year	No .sat for KCPE	Admitted to F1	%
2009	708,600	340,256	48.02
2010	746,080	360,058	48.26
2011	776,216	416,900	53.71
2012	811,930	489,900	60.34
2013	839,759	521,601	62.11
2014	889,163	566,711	63.74
2015	925,744	735,094	79.41
2016	952,445	758,179	79.60
Total	5,697,492		

Table 1 above indicates the number of candidates who completed KCPE between 2009 and 2015 and followed through the thereby completing KCSE between 2013 and 2015. Results indicate that in 2009, a total of 708 600 candidates sat for KCPE out of which 446, 696 completed secondary school with KCSE in the year 2013. Further analysis of the results indicated that the percentage of those who scored C+ and above was 17.40% and 27.61% of the KCPE and KCSE total candidature levels respectively. This implies that 82.60% or 585,304 of candidates although completed secondary school did

not qualify with the minimum C+ to join higher education at university but resulted to furthering their education through vocational or technical education. It is important to note that the government only sponsors a small number of those who score C+ and above implying that the number of candidates who pursue vocational and technical education is higher. This follows for the other years of 2010 and 2011 with slight variations.

With critical review of these findings, it is important to critically analyze the career counseling services offered to secondary school students. Of interest are the conditions, nature, and general career information given to students by career counseling teachers at secondary school level. According to reviewed studies by Masinde (2003) and Waudu (2001) Kenya approaches to career guidance is highly skewed and concentrates on a very small percentage of the population. This is because the education system is competition based there by concentrating on the areas which produce fast results but kills the important and long lasting results. Nugent and Jones (2005) reckon that majority of the students and school leavers are totally ignored on career information or are provided with the wrong information that does not fit them. This results to a very high percentage of citizens with no skills and training at higher levels.

It was noted during the release of KCSE 2015 results that only 28.63% of the candidates scored grade C plus (C+) and above. This implies that 71.37% of the candidates did not qualify to join university thereby ended up furthering their trainings in Vocational and Technical Education. Though this is the case but during their four years course the counselors concentrated with the 28.63% perspective and majority of the students were ignored.

Number who Sat KCPE and who Missed Form 1 Selection

The table indicates that the number of candidates with KCPE certificate that has missed form 1 admission has been declining. This is a very positive direction since it is according to the Government aspirations and dream for the free primary and secondary school. Figure below displays the same information in a figure form. The table indicates the number of candidates who completed KCPE between 2009 and 2015 and followed through the thereby completing KCSE between 2013 and 2015. Results indicate that in 2009, a total of 708 600 candidates sat for KCPE out of which 446, 696 completed secondary school with KCSE in the year 2013.

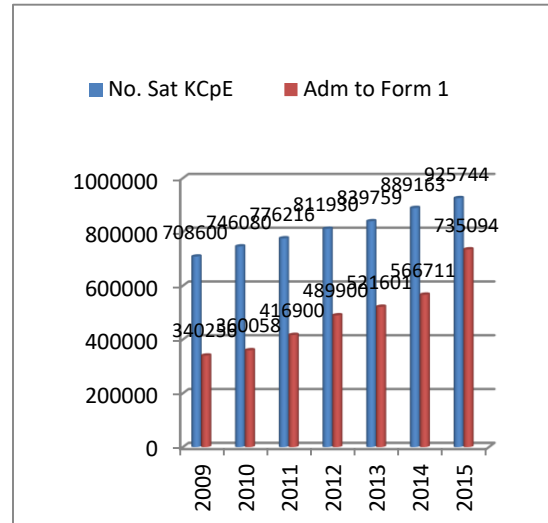


Figure 1 Source: Ministry of Education

Table 2 Number who sat KCPE and those who missed Form 1 selection

Year	No .sat for KCPE	Missed F1	%
2009	708,600	368,344	51.98
2010	746,080	386,022	51.74
2011	776,216	359,316	46.29
2012	811,930	322,030	39.66
2013	839,759	318,138	37.99
2014	889,163	322,452	36.26
2015	925,744	190,650	20.59
2016	952,445	194,565	20.43
Total	5,697,492	2,266,952	

Further analysis of the results indicated that the percentage of those who scored C+ and above was 17.40% and 27.61% of the KCPE and KCSE total candidature levels respectively. This implies that 82.60% or 585,304 of candidates although completed secondary school did not qualify with the minimum C+ to join higher education at university but resulted to furthering their education through vocational or technical education. It is important to note that the government only sponsors a small number of those who score C+ and above implying that the number of candidates who pursue vocational and technical education is higher. This follows for the other years of 2010 and 2011 with slight variations.

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Figure 2 above indicates the number of candidates who sat for KCPE and missed form one. It is clear that the transition rate has been on the increase implying that Free Secondary School is bearing fruits. In the year 2015, out of 925,744 candidates, only 190,650 missed form One which translate to 20.59%. These findings depict that majority of the student got access to career counseling services which is offered at secondary school level.

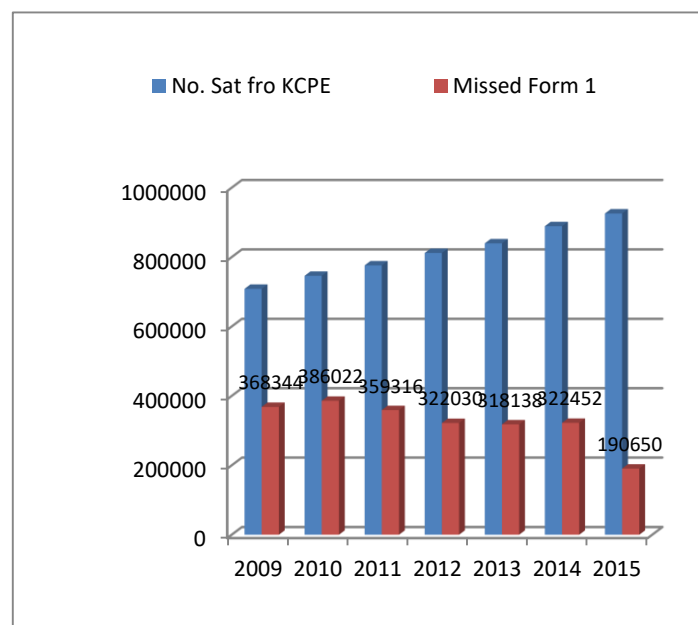


Figure 2: Candidate who sat for KCPE and Missed Form 1 admission

Table 3 indicates the number of candidates who sat for KCPE at primary level and transited to secondary school. Transition rate has been increasing over the years where it has gradually progressed from 48.02 % in 2009 to 79.41% in 2015. These findings implies that in 2009, more than half of the students failed to join secondary school which has a very negative impact in the economy. Within the last seven years 2009 to 2015, a total of 2,266,952 out of 5,697,492 KCPE candidates failed to join secondary school and

either joined Village polytechnics for Vocational and Technical Education, learnt the job on the job or joined the economy with no specialized skill. This translates to 39.79%. The productivity and quality from this group is very low due to lack of knowledge and skills therefore hindering the country from attaining her vision. Most of these candidates had not even been prepared to join Village Polytechnic for skills development because the career counseling services are concentrated at secondary level.

Table 3: KCPE and KCSE results, 2009-2015

Year	KCPE	KCSE	C+ and above	% of C+ at KCSE	% C+ at KCPE	% of C and below
2009	708,600	446,696 (2013)	123,365	27.61	17.40	82.60
2010	746,080	483,630 (2014)	165,776	34.28	22.21	77.79
2011	776,216	522,870 (2015)	149,717	28.63	19.29	80.71
2012	811,930	577071 (2016)	88,928	15.41	10.95	89.05
Total	2,230,896	1,453,196	438, 856	30.20	19.67	82.54

Extracted from KNEC: KCSE Results (2013-2015)

KCPE and KCSE Results, 2009-2015

Out of 2,230,896 candidates who sat for KCPE between 2009 and 2011, 438,856 scored a grade of C+ and above which translates to 19.67%. Although the teacher counselors concentrated and aimed at

university trainings, the reality is that 80.33% of the candidates had to pursue further education through vocational and technical areas. These results are presented in figure 1 below.

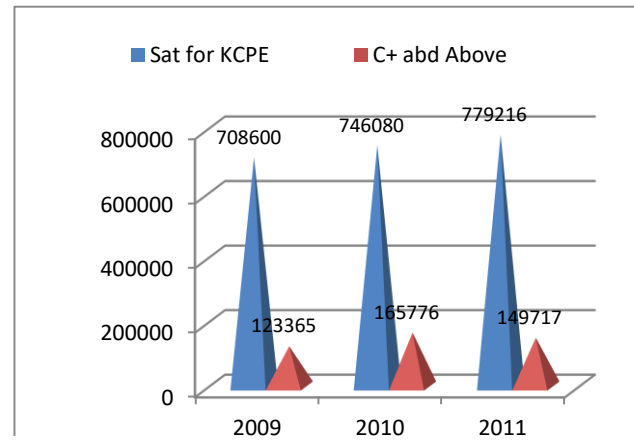


Figure 3: Performance of C+ and above; KCPE, KCSE

Data available from the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) indicate that only 30% of the candidates attain grade C+ and above in 2013-2015, which is the minimum qualifying grade for university entry. These are further categorized in overall points of 58 and 60 for girls and boys respectively implying that not all candidates who score a grade of C+ is admitted to pursue University Education. This finally implies that only about 15 % of the candidates at KCSE level are admitted to pursue courses at university level.

Among those admitted very few are admitted to the professions or careers of their choice as noted by the frequency of changes done by students on admission within and across universities. This implies that less than 10% of the school leavers end up with professions of their choice. Of great concern is the number of those who do not make to university UNESCO (2002). These results notwithstanding, career counseling at secondary school level has been noted to be skewed toward the minority for the entry level and subject choices. The Figure presents the information above.

Kenya Institute of Highways and Building Technology (KIHBT) Intakes

To investigate the case further, this study selected on Technical Training Institute to analyze the candidates who joined for vocational training. Kenya Institute of Highways and Building Technology (KIHBT) is a Government Technical Training Institution under the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MOTI) that specializes on trainings in engineering related courses. Courses such as Civil Engineering, Mechanical engineering, Electrical Engineering, Building Construction, Architecture at Certificate, Diploma and Higher Diploma levels are offered. The

graduates are absorbed by the economy at different levels as technicians and technologist in construction and related fields.

Table 4 presents the data collected from the existing records in the institute on number admitted to pursue the offered technical education at diploma and craft certificate levels between year 2011 and 2015. This data excluded those candidates who were not admitted where the major cause for failure to be admitted was poor performance in Mathematics and Sciences. Failure to select physics at secondary school level was also used as a method to limit admission. The table also presents the subject selection at secondary school. It emerged that although most of the students ended up pursuing technical education, they had not laid good foundation in the relevant subjects at secondary school level (Carnoy, 2007)

However, on further scrutinizing records subject choice at secondary level, data revealed that out of 5,090 admitted between 2011 and 2015, only 1,260 students had firm technical foundation laid by the three science subjects at secondary school (Physics, Biology and Chemistry). This translates to 24.75% of the candidates admitted. The others (75.25%) had pursued two humanity subjects at secondary school level with the premise that the subjects could boost their grades and finally enabling them to join higher training at university level. This depicts clearly that during subject selection which is done at Form 2; these students were misguided or not given the right information based on their actual potential (Obonyo, 1994). The counselor teachers concentrated on the few who scored C+ and above which resulted to skewed approach.

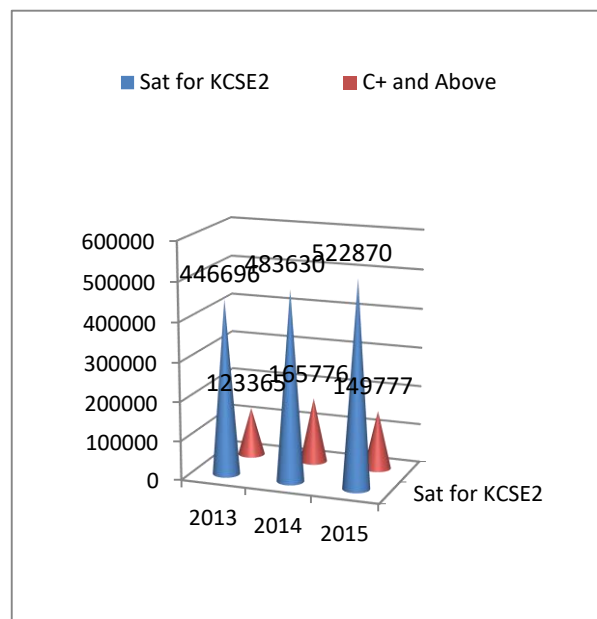


Figure 4: Those who sat for KCSE and scored C+ and above

Table 4: Admissions and subject selection

Year	Admitted	Those with 3 % Sciences at KCSE Level	%
2011	867	184	21.22
2012	976	223	22.84
2013	1004	257	25.59
2014	1084	287	26.48
2015	1159	309	26.67
Total	5,090	1,260	24.75

The figure below further demonstrates the number of students admitted in the institute and their subject selection at secondary school level. It is very clear that although the students ended pursuing engineering related courses at diploma and craft certificate levels, they had not prepared at secondary school level through subject selection. This correlates with the findings of Mbale (2004) who argued that high school students should be provided with right career information.

CONCLUSION

From the data, findings and discussions presented, it can be summarized and concluded that there is a

challenge in the way information is given to students at secondary school level by career guidance and counselors. Career information given to the students cannot prepare the kind of citizens that the country require to enable the country achieve the aspired Vision 2030. Instead of students being supplied with the right information, they are given the wrong or no information concerning careers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the education system to achieve its objectives by preparing the citizens to right careers that will enable them contribute in the economy there is need to overhaul the students' career services at secondary school level. Career counseling should also be totally overhauled and separated from the other forms of counseling and students guidance be based on their potential and talents.

It is also recommended that career guidance professionals should be engaged by the Ministry of Education to handle the matters of students' career choice. Professional from all fields of the economy should be engaged in relaying career information instead of leaving the whole burden to the counselor teacher and school administration which concentrate on raising school's mean grade at the expense of students' lives.

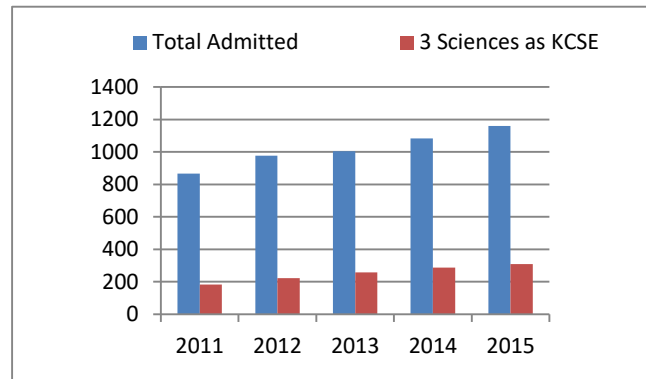


Figure 5: Admission and subject selection

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