

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
INNOVATIVE RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE**

ISSN-2213-1356

www.ijirk.com

**Parents' Role In Career Guidance Among Secondary School
Students In Kikuyu Sub-County: A Case Of Kiambu
County – Kenya**

Wanjiku Wang'ombe

Graduate in guidance and counseling
Kenya Methodist University

Zipporah Kaaria & Dr. Winfred Kithinji

Lecturer, Department of Theology, Religious Studies and Counseling
Kenya Methodist University

Abstract

Parents invest heavily in their children's education with career success as the desired outcome. Since adolescent's decision-making ability is still developing, they need guidance from adults such as parents and teachers when making career decisions. The objective of the study was to identify parent engagement strategies used in career guidance. The study involved mixed methods of social inquiry under a descriptive research design. A sample of 207 parents was chosen from Form 3 pupils of 17 schools in Kikuyu Sub-County. The study established that circulars and newsletters were the most common methods used while career days / expos and parents meetings were the most common interactive programs offered by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County to assist parents in providing career guidance to their children. A wide range of interventions could be adopted to help improve the effectiveness of career guidance by parents in secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.

Background to the Study

Parents make significant sacrifices to ensure their children get a good education. They see this as a gateway to the child's success in adult life. According to the USAID 2010 report, the percentage of household expenditure allocated to education in Asian and African countries ranges from 6.5 percent to 12.5 percent. Morgan (2012) however laments that although many governments around the world, including USA, UK and Canada, have even included parent involvement in education in their legislation and policy, "the extent to which this has had a clear and effective impact on the positive involvement of parents in young people's career development, is somewhat less than clear". Parent involvement in the child's schooling and learning process is broadly evident but involvement in career guidance seems to be lagging behind. Morgan's evaluation of the 2008 Australia Family School Partnership Framework Initiatives found that partnership between families and schools "contribute to the building of social capital in the community". However, the parent is an underutilized resource available to schools in student career guidance.

A survey conducted in 2011 on parent engagement strategies in 54 schools in the Central Ranges, Victoria State, Australia, by the Local Learning and Employment Networks reported that 43% had a parent involvement plan, 19% had a plan in process and 17% of the schools did not have a parent involvement plan. Another survey conducted in 2011 on 33 schools across Australia by Miles Morgan in consultation with Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) provided evidence that schools are using "Bandaid" or "Deficit" models of parental engagement in schools. The schools focused on "discrete one-off events or interventions typically targeted at points of potential stress in the schooling or transition process" (Morgan, 2012). The survey revealed that parents are only involved in "subject selection for university" and that although the schools had a career program starting from Year 7, parent engagement did not start until Year 10 "as this is when the parents start having an interest in the child's future". This discrete limited approach to parental engagement shows that the schools are underutilizing the resource and capital that parents could bring to the young people's career development.

Secondary school age student's individual decision-making ability is still developing both intellectually and emotionally (Fouziah, Amla & Ramlee, 2010). In a study conducted by Maingi (2007) among 720 Kenyatta University students on certainty in career choice, only 32% of the respondents felt they clearly knew their interests, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. 65.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that they "feel relieved" when someone makes decisions for them. Failure to make appropriate and satisfactory career choice may lead to frustration in adult life, withdrawal or negativism. She links this frustration to student unrest which has occurred in secondary schools in Kenya. Based on these findings it was clear that adolescents needed adult guidance in making career choices. The parent is well placed to provide career decision guidance because they have more background information about the child's personality traits and interests than the institutions career counselor. The aim of this study was to assess parents' role in providing career guidance so that the adolescents could make informed career decisions.

Statement of the Problem

Parent involvement in the child's career guidance is not given priority in schools. The parent is an underutilized resource in this area of education. Morgan (2012) states that "generally, there is a lack of definitive international research or data that demonstrates effective types of parental engagement strategies, and their positive impact on the transition outcomes of young people".

Purpose of the Study

To establish the influence of parent engagement strategies used in career guidance in secondary school pupils in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was developed by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown and Gail Hackett in 1994 and is based on Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. It provides a detailed link between career self-efficacy and parental support. According to the SCCT interest model, adolescents develop and interest in a given career based on what they have been exposed to in their family and cultural environment. Through continued activity exposure, practise and feedback, people refine skills and develop expectations about outcomes of activity engagements. The SCCT choice model proposes that many adolescent make a career choice not only based on interest but also on environmental influences such as the level of support (family, financial and emotional support) and barriers which create restrictive environmental conditions such as family economic need, family pressures, educational limitations and cultural values (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2002).

Based on this theory, the parent plays a crucial role in determining the adolescent's career choice. Using this theory parents may be coached and motivated to provide effective support, build their children's career self-efficacy and help mitigate the environmental constraints that limit career choice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parent Engagement Strategies Used In Career Guidance

Morgan (2012) categorized parent engagement strategies in career development in young people in Australia into four typical types namely workshops, career exhibitions, print-based or digital career information and web pages for education training and career information. A survey he conducted in schools and universities in Australia reported use of parent information sessions, "information evenings" schools newsletter and online information posted on the school or other websites to convey career related messages. The interactive strategies reported were career related interviews by the careers trainer involving both parents and students, career expositions held in conjunction with local tertiary institutions, having parents as career guest speakers, parents offering work experience programs, workshops, open days and compulsory volunteering schemes.

The survey revealed that most schools rely on traditional information giving strategies which are passive while Morgan (2012) suggests that best practice should involve interactive strategies of parent engagement. Morgan describes parent engagement strategies throughout Australia with regard to career development as "still in the early stages of development with the strategies where they do exist being behind the recognized standards of international best practice". According to him, although schools are aware of the need to implement more comprehensive and holistic parent engagement strategies, the schools do not have the time, resources or capacity to engage parents beyond conventional information giving strategies. He also laments that parent engagement strategies used in Australia are adopted from United States of America, Canada and United Kingdom. Effectiveness of these strategies in the Australian context would need to be investigated.

Harackiewicz, Rozek, Hulleman and Hyde (2012) conducted a field experiment to test whether 'theory-based interventions' would help parents motivate their adolescent children take more mathematics and science courses in high school and pursue careers in science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The two parent engagement strategies used in the experiment were brochures mailed to parents and information available on a website. The result of the experiment was that students whose parents participated in the experiment took on

average one semester more of science and mathematics courses in the last 2 years of high school compared to the control group. The results demonstrated that parent engagement strategies that involve providing parents with information can be effective. This contradicts Morgan's (2012) view that this is not best practice and effective parent engagement strategies should involve active structured activities and interactive dialogue between parents and the school that potentially assist not only their own child but also the entire cohort similar to their child's placement. Brochures and use of websites may be strategies that are appropriate for parents in Western countries where people have a reading culture. However, the study will aim to establish whether these strategies are appropriate for the Kenyan context.

A survey conducted on 32 students who had undergone the Jiva program at the Sri Kumaran Children's Home reported increased confidence in making decisions about their careers. They attributed this confidence to the increase in knowledge and awareness as a result of the workshops, career reports and career days. Given that parents are a resource in the career day, this indicates their effective engagement in career guidance. However, Sri Kumaran Children's Home's effort to provide comprehensive, India-appropriate career guidance focuses heavily on student engagement strategies. Parent engagement strategies have not been given significant emphasis.

A study on guidance and counselling in Nigerian Secondary Schools, (Oye, Obi, Mohd & Bernice, 2012) suggests that parent engagement occurs through PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings. This provides a forum for dialogue between the teacher and the parent. The author uses parent attendance to PTA meetings as a yardstick to measure the progress of guidance and counselling programs in schools. However, PTA meetings are general. This study does not address parent engagement strategies that are specific to career guidance.

In Kenya, studies have been conducted on parent involvement in their child's education in general. They do not refer specifically to parent engagement in career guidance. Kimu (2012) in his dissertation on parent involvement in public schools in Kenya, suggests that parents in public primary schools have mainly been engaged in fundraising initiatives and that they do not participate actively in other aspects of their children's schooling. The author highlights that Kenya's educational policies advocate for parental involvement in the financing and management of schools through the PTA and the Board of Governors.

There was a research gap with regards to parent engagement strategies used by secondary schools in Kenya in career guidance, thus the need for this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study involved both a quantitative and qualitative mode of inquiry. In particular this study utilized a descriptive research. The study collected descriptive information about parent engagement strategies in career guidance. The study was conducted in secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County of Kenya. Kikuyu Sub-County hosts 17 secondary schools with a student population of 8,131 (Department of Education, Kikuyu Sub-County, 2018). The study focus was on parents of the Form 3 pupils because by this time the subject choice process was complete and focus was on the impact that this subject choice would have on the child's national examination result, tertiary education and career. This parent was in a position to provide feedback on how the subject choice and career decision making process had been. The Form 3 student population in 2018 was 2,066 (Department of Education, Kikuyu Sub-County, 2018). For the purpose of triangulation, data was also collected from selected career guidance counselors and School Principals from each of the 17 secondary schools.

Stratified random sampling technique was used to divide the population into three strata namely: national schools, county schools and sub-county schools categories. A sample of 10% of the parents' population of Form 3 students was chosen from each of the 17 secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.

Category of schools (strata)	Total population of Form 3 parents (1 parent per child)	Sample (10% of the total population)
National schools	832	83
County schools	438	44
Sub-County schools	796	80
Total	2,066	207

The participants of the study were 207 parents of secondary school students from all the 17 schools in Kikuyu Sub-County. The study also included one career counselor and a principal from each of the schools. A sample of 241 participants was justified to allow for in-depth quantitative and qualitative data from the parents, career counselors and school principals participants.

The data collection methods used in the study included questionnaires and interviews to collect data from parents who were the key informants. For triangulation and collection of richer data, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from career counselors and school principals.

Coding of data was done before data analysis. For analysis, a computer package, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the quantitative data obtained and to establish the relationship between parent career guidance and parent engagement strategies. Analyzed quantitative data was presented in the form of frequency tables, graphs and percentages.

Qualitative data was collected in the form of words or narratives derived from transcripts of the interviews. Analysis of qualitative data involved organizing the data into common categories, themes and patterns of thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and behavior change of the participants. The data was analyzed thematically. Qualitative data was thematically organized and presented in narrative form to enrich the quantitative outcomes of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Parent Engagement Strategies and Effective Career Guidance in Secondary Schools

The first objective of the study sought to establish the influence of parent engagement strategies used in career guidance in secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County. The findings are as described in the subsequent subsections.

Methods Used by Schools to Assist Parents in Providing Career Guidance to their Children

The parents of Form 3 students in Secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County were requested to indicate the extent to which a set of identified methods were used by their schools to assist them in providing career guidance to their children. The responses were rated using a scale of 1 – 4 where 1 = yearly, 2 = termly, 3 = more than once a term and 4 = never. The findings are as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Parents' opinion as to the extent to which various methods were used by schools to assist them in providing career guidance to their children (N=207)

Methods	Yearly		Termly		> once a term		Never	
	. Freq	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Circular / Letter	48	23.2	75	36.2	12	5.8	72	34.8
Newsletter	33	15.9	91	44.0	10	4.8	73	35.3
Brochure	28	13.5	21	10.1	6	2.9	152	73.4
Email	15	7.2	23	11.1	12	5.8	157	75.8
Website	17	8.2	15	7.2	6	2.9	169	81.6

Regarding the use of circulars / letters by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.1 indicates that 36.2% of the parents said that the circulars / letters were used on a termly basis; 23.2% of the parents said that the circulars / letters were used on an yearly basis while 5.8% of the parents said that the circulars / letters were used more than once a term. However, 34.8% of the parents said that the circulars / letters were never used. This implied that most of the parents did acknowledge that schools used circulars / letters to assist them in providing career guidance to their children mostly on a termly or yearly basis.

Regarding the use of newsletters by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.1 indicates that 44% of the parents said that the newsletters were used on a termly basis; 15.9% of the parents said that the newsletters were used on an yearly basis while 4.8% of the parents said that the newsletters were used more than once a term. However, 35.3% of the parents said that the newsletters were never used. This implied that most of the parents did acknowledge that schools used newsletters to assist them in providing career guidance to their children mostly on a termly or yearly basis.

Regarding the use of brochures by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.1 indicates that most (73.4%) of the parents said that brochures were never used. However, 13.5% of the parents said that brochures were used on an yearly basis; 10.1% of the parents said that brochures were used on a termly basis while 2.9% of the parents said that brochures were used more than once a term. This implied that most of the parents were of the opinion that schools never used brochures to assist them in providing career guidance to their children.

Regarding the use of emails by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.1 indicates that most (75.8%) of the parents said that emails were never used. However, 11.1% of the parents said that emails were used on a termly basis; 7.2% of the parents said that emails were used on an yearly basis while 5.8% of the parents said that emails were used more than once a term. This implied that most of the parents were of the opinion that schools never used emails to assist them in providing career guidance to their children.

Regarding the use of websites by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.1 indicates that most (81.6%) of the parents said that websites were never used. However, 8.2% of the parents said that websites were used on an yearly basis; 7.2% of the parents said that websites were used on a termly basis while 2.9% of the parents said that websites were used more than once a term. This implied that most of the parents were of the opinion that schools never used websites to assist them in providing career guidance to their children.

These findings implied that circulars and newsletters were the most common methods used by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County to assist parents in providing career guidance to their children while brochures, emails and websites were the other methods though not commonly used. The findings were in agreement with those of Morgan (2012) who in a study carried out in Australia reported that most of the O Level schools in the country utilized parent information documents including schools' newsletters, circulars, emails messages and information posted on the schools' websites to convey career related messages to the parents. However, the study argued that these methods of communicating with parents regarding career guidance were largely passive and therefore suggested that the best practice should be to involve more interactive methods of parent engagement (Morgan, 2012). In contrast, in a study conducted to test whether 'theory based interventions' would help parents motivate their adolescent children to take up more mathematics and science courses in high school in order to pursue careers in science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) later on at tertiary level, Harackiewicz *et al.* (2012) established that the two parent engagement strategies commonly used were brochures mailed to parents and information available on a website. The results of the study, however, demonstrated that parent engagement strategies that involved providing parents with requisite information can be effective in helping them to effectively guide their children in career matters.

Interactive Programs Offered by Schools to Assist Parents in Providing Career Guidance to their Children

The parents of Form 3 students in Secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County were requested to indicate the extent to which a set of identified interactive programs were offered by their schools to assist them in providing career guidance to their children. The responses were rated using a scale of 1 – 4 where 1 = yearly, 2 = termly, 3 = more than once a term and 4 = never. The findings are as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Parents' opinion as to the extent to which various interactive programs were offered by schools to assist them in providing career guidance to their children (N=207)

Methods		Yearly		Termly		> once a term		Never	
Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Career day / expo	64	30.9	43	20.8	7	3.4		93	44.9
Parents meetings	62	30.0	86	41.5	17	8.2		42	20.3
Parents workshop	46	22.2	27	13.0	10	4.8		124	59.9
Parent guest speaker	41	19.8	44	21.3	20	9.7		102	49.3
Parent offering students work experience	25	12.1	21	10.1	17	8.2		144	69.6

Regarding the use of career day / expo by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.2 indicates that 30.9% of the parents said that the career day / expo were used on an yearly basis; 20.8% of the parents said that the career day / expo were used on a termly basis while 3.4% of the parents said that the career day / expo were used more than once a term. However, 44.9% of the parents said that the career

day / expo were never used. This implied that most of the parents did acknowledge that schools used career day / expo to assist them in providing career guidance to their children mostly on a termly or yearly basis.

Regarding the use of parents meetings by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.2 indicates that 41.5% of the parents said that the parents meetings were used on a termly basis; 30% of the parents said that parents meetings were used on an yearly basis while 8.2% of the parents said that parents meetings were used more than once a term. However, 20.3% of the parents said that parents meetings were never used. This implied that most of the parents did acknowledge that schools used parents meetings to assist them in providing career guidance to their children mostly on a termly or yearly basis.

Regarding the use of parents workshop by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, table 1.2 indicates that most (59.9%) of the parents said that parents workshop were never used. However, 22.2% of the parents said that parents workshop were used on an yearly basis; 13% of the parents said that parents workshop were used on a termly basis while 4.8% of the parents said that parents workshop were used more than once a term. This implied that most of the parents were of the opinion that schools barely used parents workshop to assist them in providing career guidance to their children.

Regarding the use of parent guest speaker by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, Table 1.2 indicates that 49.3% of the parents said that parent guest speakers were never used. However, 21.3% of the parents said that parent guest speakers were used on a termly basis; 19.8% of the parents said that parent guest speakers were used on an yearly basis while 9.7% of the parents said that parent guest speakers were used more than once a term. This implied that there was split opinion among most of the parents as to whether schools used parent guest speakers to assist them in providing career guidance to their children. Regarding the use of parent offering students work experience by schools to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children, table 1.2 indicates that most (69.6%) of the parents said that parent offering students work experience were never used. However, 12.1% of the parents said that parent offering students work experience were used on an yearly basis; 10.1% of the parents said that parent offering students work experience were used on a termly basis while 8.2% of the parents said that parent offering students work experience were used more than once a term. This implied that most of the parents were of the opinion that schools never used parent offering students work experience to assist them in providing career guidance to their children.

These findings implied that career days / expos and parents meetings were the most common interactive programs offered by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County to assist parents in providing career guidance to their children while parents workshops, parent guest speakers and parent offers on students work experience were the other interactive programs being offered though not commonly applied. schools did not have the time, resources or capacity to engage parents beyond conventional information giving strategies.

The results also agreed with those of Supreeth and Aravind (2015) who also pointed that most schools organize career days, parents' meetings and workshops where speakers on different careers, often chosen from the school's parent pool and from the career counselor's database of career experts, are used to enlighten parents on their role with regard to career guidance of their children. In these forums, the parents are periodically informed about career activities in the schools through circulars or newsletters from the counselor. In most of the occasions, career guidance counselors are also available to meet parents on a voluntary basis for one-on-one sessions to discuss queries regarding their child's career development.

In contrast, Kimu (2012) in a study on parent involvement in public schools in Kenya suggested that parents in public schools were mainly engaged in fundraising initiatives and barely did they participate actively in other

aspects of their children's schooling such as career guidance. These sentiments were also echoed by Oye *et al.* (2012) who in a study conducted in Nigeria suggested that parent engagement in public schools in the country occurred mainly through PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings where the main focus is on school development matters. The study noted that the PTA meetings were general in nature and could therefore not be used as a yardstick to measure the progress of parents' involvement in guidance and counselling programs in the schools. This study thus called for institution of more effective parent engagement strategies that are specific to parents' role in career guidance.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The study results revealed that a wide range of methods that included circulars/letters, newsletters, brochures, emails and websites were used by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County to assist parents in providing career guidance to their children. However, it was the circulars and newsletters that were the commonly used methods, on yearly and termly basis, while emails and websites were the least used methods. Similarly, the study results also revealed that a wide range of interactive programs that included career days/expos, parents meetings, parents workshops, parent guest speakers and student offers for work experience from parents were used by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County to assist the parents in providing career guidance to their children. However, most of the parents did acknowledge that the schools commonly used career days / expos and parents meetings, on a termly or yearly basis.

While parents workshops, parent guest speakers and student offers for work experience from parents were the least applied interactive programs. From the findings, most of the parents also shared the view that the most effective aspect of the parent engagement strategies used by the schools for career guidance was the interactive sessions between the teacher, parent and the student done on one on one basis.

Conclusions

Use of circulars and newsletters as well as career days / expos and parents meetings were the main parent engagement strategies employed by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County.

Recommendations

There is need to diversify parent engagement strategies being employed by secondary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County to not only include the traditional methods of circulars, newsletters and parents meetings but also use modern interactive tools such as emails, SMSs, WhatsApp groups and phone calls to parents to ensure they keep abreast of all career guidance events planned in the schools which would in turn enhance their level of engagement in these important events.

REFERENCES

- Byrne, E.M. & Beavers, W.S. (1993). Career education, career guidance and curricula choice: A research review. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 2(3), 23-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F103841629300200309>
- Farthing, J. (2004) Book Review: Career guidance and public policy: Bridging the gap. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 13(3), 71-72. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F103841620401300316>
- Fouziah, M., Amla, M. S., & Ramlee, M. (2010). The influence of contextual aspects on career decision making of Malaysian technical students. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 7(C), 369-375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.10.050>
- Kimu, A.M. (2012). *Parent involvement in public primary schools in Kenya*. (Doctoral thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa). Retrieved from <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/6031>
- Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D. & Hackett, G. (2002). Social cognitive career theory. In: Brown, D, *Career Choice and Development* (4th Ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp 255-311
- Mugenda, O. M. & Mugenda, A.G. (2003). *Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Nairobi, Kenya: Acts Press.
- Maingi, L.W. (2007). *Certainty in career choice among Kenyatta University students: Implications for career counseling*. (Master's thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya). Retrieved from <http://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/123456789/12677/Certainty%20in%20career%20choice%20among%20Kenyatta%20University%20students%20implications%20for%20career%20counseling.pdf;sequence=1>
- Supreeth, S. & Aravind, S. (2015). Delivering Career Guidance: Case Study of a School-Based Method from India. *Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning*. 4(1): 24-37. Retrieved from http://www.iaclp.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/4_Supreeth_and_Aravind.73115323.pdf