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Evaluating The Accessibility And Effectiveness Of Career Guidance Information For Secondary School Candidates On Technical And Vocational Education And Training Courses In Uganda

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Abstract
The purpose of the study was to assess the availability of career guidance information to secondary school candidates in Uganda. This study was guided by the Theory of Enlightenment Education and the Educational Theory of Pragmatism, emphasizing the integration of scientific and technological education and the practical application of knowledge. The conceptual framework depicted how the career guidance information to the secondary school candidates influences the choice of TVET courses. To achieve this, the study employed a descriptive research design, applying a mixed research methodology approach, targeting 300 secondary school students, 10 secondary school administrators and 10 TVET college administrators from selected institutions in Uganda. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to gather representative data. Questionnaires and interview guide data collection instruments, were developed, pre-tested for validity and reliability using the Cronbach alpha method and subsequently analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A mean of 2.61 suggested an average of a somewhat positive perception regarding the accessibility of career guidance information related to TVET, whereas the standard deviation of 0.745 implies a degree of variability in respondents' opinions, indicating that while some participants might perceive sufficient availability of career guidance information, others may have a less optimistic view. The discussion showed that teachers' perception exhibits a substantial positive influence on the selection of TVET courses by secondary school students with β=0.403, supported by a t-statistic of 2.742 and p-value of 0.008. This indicated a positive perception of secondary school teachers in Uganda on TVET as a career choice by the candidates associated with a corresponding increase in secondary school students choosing TVET courses. The study concluded that access to career guidance information, the absence of diagnostic assessments, and disparities in career guidance departments significantly influence TVET course selection by students. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that the Ministry of Education in Uganda to implement comprehensive career guidance programs in secondary schools, establishing dedicated career guidance departments to empower students with the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding TVET course selection. This study contributes to the existing literature by proposing a career guidance model that integrates all stakeholders and emphasizes the need for policy reforms to incorporate TVET concepts into the regular education curriculum.
Keywords: *Career Guidance, Technical, Vocational, Education, Training, selection.*

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I. Introduction.

Technical Vocational Education and Training

It has become a worldwide belief that Technical and vocational skills are key resources for economic development. A well-educated and well-trained population is crucial for the efficient acquisition, creation and dissemination of knowledge and skills that increase productivity and economic growth. In the knowledge-based economy, information and technology are the driving forces of economic development (Okello, 2011). The global education agenda 2030 aims at contributing to the eradication of poverty through the 17 Sustainable Development goals among which goal 4 is on education and aims to" ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." The call for more relevant education is increasing given the concerns of visible skills mismatch among school graduates in relation to the available job opportunities (James, Ddamba, & Wilson, 2019).

From a historic point of view, there was no clear policy for a technical sector at the start of the Education system in Uganda. Its organization at a later stage was a challenge due to lack of a clear curriculum

and the attributed education policies of the time. When the missionaries started education in the country, The Uganda government was not involved in the processes carried out. The Christian missionaries educated Africans single handed as the Uganda government was not involved in running of technical education (Okello, 2014). In Uganda therefore, Vocational education has not been popular in Uganda as the National council of higher education in Uganda (National Council for Higher Education, 2000) states. BTVET, commonly known as Business Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) sector, was created to meet the increasing demands for skilled manpower (Uganda Ministry of education and sports, 2006).

Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET), is incorporated with Business education and is hence known as: Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTVET). The BTVET act of 2008 is the established legal instrument guiding the policy formulation and reforms for this education sector. The act provides that the objective of BTVET is to provide relevant and quality knowledge, values and skills for purposes of academic progression and employment in the labour market to the larger number of persons in an affordable way, and to enhance the productivity capabilities of the individual for employment and self-employment (GOU, 2008). Although the general public perspective about TVET in Uganda has been negative, there are various education reform reports which have been made over the past fifty years on TVET.After the Uganda government realizing the un avoidable importance of TVET, it developed a framework for a Strategic plan.

This plan is formulated in Uganda's Vision 2025 and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2010/11 – 2014/15. The Strategic Plan is embedded in the education policy framework and hinged on the BTVET Act of 2008. It incorporates activities by the BTVET Department and the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) under the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

This Strategic Plan on Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) addresses these skill shortages. The Plan (2012/3 to 2021/22) builds on considerable progress in the reform of the BTVET system achieved during the last decade, notably the BTVET Act of 2008 and the establishment of the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF).

The Strategic Plan is titled "Skilling Uganda", which denotes a paradigm shift for skills development in Uganda. The BTVET system will be transformed from an educational sub-sector into a comprehensive system of skills development for employment, enhanced productivity and growth. The main purpose will be to create employable skills and competencies relevant in the labour market instead of educational certificates. It will embrace all Ugandans in need of skills, not only primary and secondary school leavers.

Under the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda, the department of TVET Operations and Management was formed after a mini-restructuring of the Ministry of Education and Sports that created the TVET Directorate in April 2021.Considering the past challenges facing TVET in Uganda, The Government came up with a policy with a vision of: "Quality employable skills for all, through inclusive and responsive TVET delivery services". This policy is expected to be used as the instrument that will improve the existing situation. The developed (TVET- Policy, 2019) has a mandate: "To provide quality skills training services to all through various forms of TVET delivery (formal, informal, and non-formal) by working with all educational / work-based institutions and providers in the country. This policy also has a mission: "To provide technical guidance and support in the implementation of TVET policies, strategies, and regulations and promote the delivery of quality-employable skills to all persons in Uganda for individual and national development".

This article views the efforts that should be considered in preparing the students within the secondary schools in Uganda that are the mother institutions which feed the TVET industry. The (TVET-Policy, 2019) is not so articulate about TVET awareness in secondary schools so as to effectively implement the objectives of the developed policy.

Career Guidance

The Republic of Uganda Career Guidance Handbook (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2011) defines career guidance as comprehensive efforts undertaken to help students access information about the available opportunities for education and making career choices and decisions regarding training institutions and courses alongside corresponding career developmental options and job prospects after completion. Career guidance is also defined as: "Services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training, and occupational choices and to manage their careers (OECD, 2004). It has been observed that the counseling and guidance helps the students to develop career competencies and ultimately, they are more motivated because it helps them to develop career identity (Meijers et al., 2013)

The term "career" refers the wide range of work, vocational, and life-role issues that a person encounters. As one is faced a number of challenges and changes, the role of counselling in career/life planning is a significant requirement that is equated with success. Career counselling is an interpersonal process that moves beyond providing client-relevant information to broader issues, such as career development, work-

adjustment, work-dysfunction, and integration of life roles with other work roles that may or may not be directly related to work (Herr, 1997). Career counseling refers to explore the interests of students and guide them to choose their professional career keeping in view their strengths, weaknesses, resources and opportunities. Students always require professional career counselors to guide them to develop self-awareness in personal interests, skills, knowledge, potentials, weaknesses and assess occupational opportunities such as employment trends, competencies in the field, requirement of employment and job description (Kok & Low, 2017).Furthermore, career counselling involves exploring the other person's point of view, tentatively offering other angles for consideration, and discussing possible action planning with the client (Borgen, 2001).

The concept of career counseling and vocational guidance carries importance for the trainees of TVET sector especially in poor countries. The majority of intake in TVET sector of under developing countries belongs to lower strata of the society. Their families and belongings are not well educated to guide their siblings to assess their personal interest and scan the demand of the market.

Challenges faced by students in starting a career

A lot of students at candidate level do not have the right information in time to choose Advanced-level combinations that are suitable for your chosen university course. Many students go on to pursue degrees based on results, rather than courses they would like to have chosen. This leads to uncertainties during the skilling programs and hence lack of proper performances.

There is a general lack of awareness of where jobs will be available, leading students to choose courses that do not give them relevant qualifications for the job market. It has become apparent that; many secondary schools do not have an efficient mechanism that links their students with the world of work. Most of the young and upstarting workers navigate their paths depending on the situation at hand (You will cross the bridge when you get there).

In Uganda today, there is a huge rise in the number of jobless youth. As students from institutions graduate, they definitely lack of work experience yet many employers look for people with work experience. This can be especially challenging when trying to get your first job.

A number of students are faced with a challenge of "Not looking beyond their study area". A degree does not necessarily limit them to a job in that field, as transferable skills gained at university can help them to get jobs in other sectors. An instance is when takes a science degree and then proceed to work in banking or accountancy institution.

There is a possibility of inadequacy of relevant information in Ugandan secondary schools about the TVET sector. The aim of this study is to assess career guidance among secondary school candidates to establish the extent to which they are encouraged to join TVET institutions and analyze how this factor influences the choice of TVET courses by Secondary School Candidates in Uganda.

Theoretical Framework

Mbugua et al. (2012) describes a theoretical framework serves as a guide on which to build and support the study and provides a structure to define how research will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically and analytically approach the research wholly. The research Theoretical Framework of this study was guided by the assumptions of A, N, Condorcet.

Condorcet who like other Enlightenment thinkers, believed that: There was no limit to the learning capabilities of the human mind and that progress meant the perfection of science and technology. All "men" are products of nature, with equal rights bestowed upon them to the moral, practical, and intellectual pursuits of reason. Human progress rests on an individual's ability to educate and refine himself in those three areas of human action. The human mind must progress from irrationality to rationality, from superstition to reason, from pre-scientific thought to scientific enlightenment.

Since colonization had proven the "superiority" of Western technology, such knowledge was to be spread to all through the liberating power of education. Condorcet presents his ideas at a time when higher education in Europe and the emerging power of the United States retained a classical format throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was at a later time that, the educational systems developed by these nations helped them to realize Condorcet's vision of education, that is," *mass education with a technological orientation"*. It follows that, Condorcet recognized the need for a linkage between science and the technological arts in education. He emphasizes that, through education, the citizen of the masses might, among other things, be taught to manage their own households, to know their rights and to exercise those rights, to be empowered in the face of those who possess authority, to overcome ignorant prejudices, to use reason to overcome superstition, and to advance the technological arts (Condorcet, 1955).

The fruitful information that is to be acquired by all candidate students at the secondary schools must be homogenously disseminated to them for objective awareness about what lies beyond their secondary Education. This study therefore was guided by a principle that the secondary school students must have a

technological orientation within the context of their curriculum so as to have adequate knowledge on the TVET options as assumed earlier by Condorcet.

Conceptual framework of the study

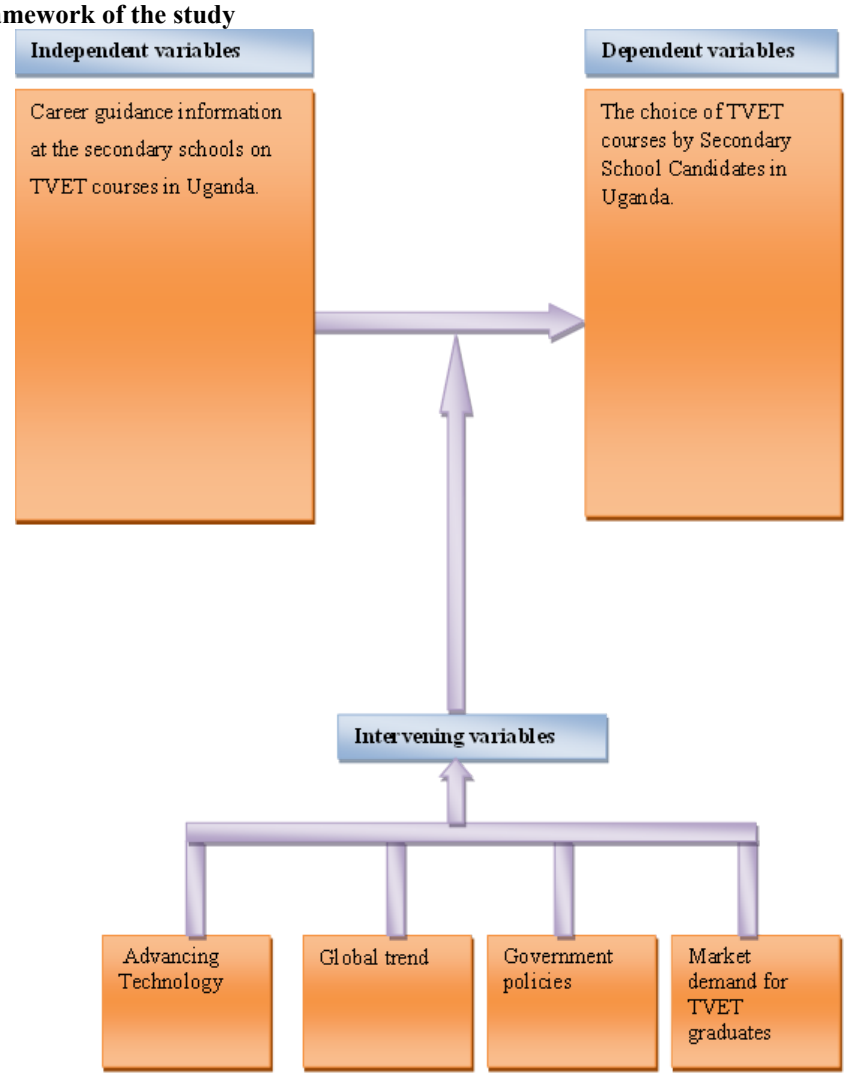

Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework Of The Study.
Source: Author 2020

II. Literature Review

Career Guidance and Counseling in TVET.

Career guidance and career education is a set of services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (Sultana, 2017).

There is a need of adequate career information that guides students towards desirable courses in TVET at secondary schools. This has a great impact on the activities and life styles within the context of their occupation. Since vocation education is craft oriented, it calls for affirmative decision by a student in secondary school who might not be aware of his/her talent. It is required that the researcher determines appropriate methods that enhance decision making by the secondary school students.

Career guidance has come under attack for having lost its impartiality and of being used in favor of general and academic education pathways and careers. But career guidance also faces restrictions due to limited choices or sometimes even forced allocation of students to TVET as pathway for low performers. In other words, no choice, therefore, no guidance (Zelloth, 2014). He concludes that "It is argued that both career guidance prior to TVET as well as career guidance within TVET can make an important contribution to TVET".

This is an accurate observation regarding the availability of career guidance information at secondary schools. This information is a guideline tool a long a clear path to quality teaching and learning process in a TVET institution. A major concern is: Is this information is available at secondary school?

The role of career counseling and vocational guidance services is precious in empowering students to select the best fit with their ability, interest, personality and in the long run a satisfied life (Santilli,Marcionetti, Rochat, Rossier, & Nota, 2017). The role of career guidance also improves the efficiency of the learner while at the training tertiary institute. This is a justification for a thorough investigation into the appropriateness of the current selection system for TVET institutions. This study establishes that: The method by which secondary students choose TVET courses directly influenced by the of factor career guidance awareness.

A study of the TVET policy review framework for Zimbabwe was carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. The consultative workshop revealed that some students follow career paths that they abandon later because of lack of guidance. This has often been caused by an absence of aptitude testing at school-leaving age. As a result, students' choices are based on societal perceptions which, in Zimbabwe, are heavily inclined favorably towards theoretical education. Symposia held in some TVET institutions in higher education have been a result of individual institutional initiative. The members concluded that, there is need for a coherent national career guidance and counseling policy across the entire TVET system in the country (Mbudzi, 2005). The researcher agrees with the findings by Joyce and anticipates a similar conclusion for the Ugandan context.

(Borchert, 2002), in his study on career choice factors of high school students, noted that, for students to make good decision on career choices, they need adequate information. This means that students must also be aware not only of the existence but also the courses being offered and the entry requirements for them to make informed decisions to enrolling into the technical and vocational training programs (Kupsoboi, 2017).

This further confirms that: Career guidance has an important role to play in student's whole-person development, given the grave need to cater for diverse student learning abilities/aptitudes and the flexibility of subject choices. It therefore helps a student to decide effectively on the choice of the intended career and projects the expected prospects attributed to a selected carrier. With proper career guidance in secondary schools, students can choose the best advanced or ordinary level certificate courses. This study is investigating whether these services are available to secondary school students in Uganda before they select a TVET option.

In his study, (Safarmamad Farid, 2019) introduces by quoting (Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard,Ivan Vianen, 2009), who said: The career decision-making process is becoming more perplexing for both adolescents and career guidance/development professionals due to the changing nature of jobs and workplace and the knowledge economy that demands greater intellectual and less physical capacity to stay competitive in the 21st century ((Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013); (Powel & Snellman, 2004)). Therefore, making a career decision that is thoughtful and based on one's interests and abilities is important because it will impact career success, family income, and job satisfaction in the future. With the purpose of a descriptive study to examine the factors influencing students' decisions to enroll in IVET lyceums in Tajikistan, Safarmamad concluded that: there is no career counselor staff in Tajikistan's schools and the role is informally played by teachers, parents, and other people. He cited studies stressing the importance of career counseling and guidance by ((Carson & Reed, 2015); Cunanan, 1995; Hierbert &Borgen, 2002; Watts & Sultana, 2004) and the role of counselors in influencing career choice ((Haney, 2002); Gaunt, 2005; OECD, 2010) for students. He finally recommended that the Ministry of Education initiates the training of career counselors and subsequently create such positions in schools.

A similar situation exists in most Ugandan secondary schools where the appointed careers master from within the teaching staff is most relevant at the time of university course selection. In the education life of most students, decision is based on the "Survival for the fittest" saying. Remnant students from UCE lack proper guidance to make the desirable choices. While releasing the 2019 UCE exams, The Daily monitor reports the Education Minister Jessica Alupo, saying:

"Those who will miss out joining A' level should consider proceeding with education in Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET), to acquire vocational and technical skills for production".

Ms Alupo also says there is no need for alarm when a child is not accommodated in O' level or A' level because there are enough vocational schools that can cater for them. "It's not right to think that all students can follow the usual trail of sitting for PLE, UCE and then UACE to university. Those who never obtained impressive scores and would not be admitted at both secondary levels will be absorbed by the technical schools," she says.

In the 2019 final UCE examinations, a total of 9,881 out of the 254,220 students who passed UCE exams are expected to be enrolled in BTVET institutions this year. Ms Alupo blames the demeaning of technical education to our education system whose emphasis lies on academic and theoretical learning rather than practical technical and vocational education.

In the same document, Mr. Ilahi Mansoor, the Assistant Commissioner for BTVET, says: "Parents whose children would miss chances of joining A' level have no reason to worry, students who will fail to make

it to A' levels because of either qualifications or lack of fees have higher chances to pursue their dream career through another path."

The better students continue for Advanced level education after which, the best is propelled to the preferred university education. Within the same year, the final UACE results sat in 2019, mulengeranews.com (February, 27th, 2020) reports that: Only about 65,000 of just over 101,000 candidates who passed the exams scored two principal passes, and therefore apply for admission to pursue university education.

An encouraging statement was made by the Minister of Education Mrs. Janet K. Museveni: **"**All those who passed qualify for Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET), and the First Lady highly recommended courses in this career path". She further on affirms that: "I wish to encourage the candidates to take up vocational education at diploma and other levels in our TVET institutions. Products of this level of training are not only the most needed in industry but are often job creators rather than job seekers," she said:

The weaker students therefore find their levels at BTVET institutions, with the rest lost various in un-desired occupations.

It is therefore evident that, even with the importance of TVET pronounced and clear, all the comments are silent about the need for career guidance but certain of the alternative pathways for the less fit secondary school students.

Career Education Guidance has a significant role to play in making TVET more attractive to students; by improving the educational offer in TVET institutions, thus promoting parity of esteem between general and vocational tracks; by increasing the permeability between TVET and non-TVET tracks; by marketing TVET as a desirable option for high achieving students; and by increasing the opportunities for students to 'taste' courses in TVET colleges in order to allow experience rather than prejudice determine their further and higher education choices (Sultana, 2017).

The researcher agrees with Sultanas concept especially the role career education guidance to increase permeability between TVET and non-TVET tracks but the challenge of a mechanism to achieve this still lays ahead. The design of an operating career guidance model encompassing all stakeholders of TVET clients and producers is proposed as an outcome of this study. (Arshad, 2018) Says:

Career counseling is found to be important in understanding and exploring personal beliefs, goals, career choices, interest and job-finding skills of the students. However, they have reported that their information on career counseling is poor. As a result, the students are unable to find venues from where to obtain career-related information, resulting in lack of future direction and significant decrease in performance.

In the conclusion of his study, he affirms that: Although Career counseling services are relevant in assisting learners to identify job opportunities and job availabilities in the area of their studies and empower them to utilize their time effectively in training for vocations to which they have tendencies, their study reveals that career counseling and vocational services are not given adequately by the parent institutions. Therefore, the availability of the services is not sufficient as per market requirement.

Muhammad Arshad generally talks about the parent institutions but specifically the secondary schools should have a well-defined system of career guidance. The Ugandan situation is not different from what they observed in their study.

In order to address the challenges currently facing TVET in terms of acceptance, access and the use of training, there needs to be an expanded awareness of its place in the present world context, and of the new-style guidance and counseling service that is needed to support it (UNESCO, 2002). Career counseling services are relevant in assisting learners to identify job opportunities and job availabilities in the area of their studies and empower them to utilize their time effectively in training for vocations to which they have tendencies. By contrast, the study reveals that career counseling and vocational services are not given adequately by the parent institutions. Therefore, the availability of the services is not sufficient as per market requirement (Muhammad Arshad , 2018).

The Thesis research findings of (Okello, 2011) indicated a lack of career guidance to be one of the major hindrances to the development of TVET. The need for career guidance is, therefore, necessary in order to alleviate the negative attitude still in existence in the country towards TVET. If career guidance is done effectively, then children will grow with the idea that TVET is one of the ingredients for development and they will come to like TVET.

Okello stresses the long-life existence of the negative attitude towards TVET by society. Although this is so, the UNESCO report still pronounces career guidance as the necessary remedy to its existence. There is a necessity to establish a career guidance resource center to address various challenges such as the importance of TVET.

In their article, (Okumu& Edward, 2018) conclude that: Career guidance ought to be given special attention in primary and secondary education. In that regard, rather than a school careers teacher ill-informed about TVET, the hiring of fully qualified advisers could help enhance the flow of students into TVET as a

competitive alternative to university education. Better still, career guidance ought to have a structure determined from the center, which should act as a guide for all schools and colleges and would ensure uniformity in the careers information that students receive across the country.

Their conclusion was quite logical and the case studies applicable to the Ugandan context. Amendments such as vocationalization of the educational curriculum have been carried out but due to lack of prior sensitization, however, the implementation receives a lot of resistance. This calls for an improved awareness scheme. The channels through which secondary school students access TVET information in selected secondary schools in Kampala District is generally insufficient. The school-based channels are mainly career sessions offered by career masters as a one-off activity which made students to sum it up as a lack of interest in the provision of career guidance by schools studied.

From the students' own efforts in search for career information, the social media came out prominently followed by teachers, meaning that students expect more in form of career guidance from their teachers (Ddamba, & Wilson, 2019). They also recommended that: there is need to support and strengthen the career masters' function in schools. The career masters should undergo refresher courses in modern technologies like how to use social media to pass on career information as the social media seems to be a darling to many of the youths.

The researcher agrees with Ddamba, and adds that, a well-designed and pronounced career guidance system needs to be created for use in secondary schools in Uganda. This study highlighted some of the issues at secondary schools that need to be addressed in order to enhance the viability of TVET programs, given the challenges presented by an ever-changing global labor market.

III. Research Design And Methodology

Philosophical Research Paradigm of the study.

This study took the form of a Positivist paradigm which is a reflection of a broader cultural phenomenon that, in the humanities, is referred to as modernism, which emphasizes the rational and the scientific strict positivist thinking (Polit & Beck, 2004). In this positivism study, the role of the researcher was limited to collecting data and interpreting it in an objective way. In this study, the researcher relied on this philosophy to collect quantitative and qualitative data that was described and statistically analyzed to make logical conclusions.

Study Research Design

This study took on the format of a descriptive research design applying a mixed research methodology approach**.** It provided the answers to questions of what, when, where, how and who. It obtained information about the availability of Career Guidance information to Secondary School Candidates on TVET courses. Its findings will be used to lay ground and provide valuable pointers for subsequent quantitative and qualitative study designs within the context of career guidance hence enhancing the career guidance departments in Uganda secondary schools.

Location of the Study and Duration

The study was carried out in the four major regions of Uganda clustered as; Northern, Western, Eastern and Central regions. The study area comprised of districts with the major TVET institutions and secondary school communities within their proximity that gave an appropriate representation of the study population.This study was carried out from January 2022 to December 2022.

Target population

The target population refers to the population from which a sample is taken. It is vital that the population sampled is representative of the entire population of the location of the study area (Kombo, 2006). The target population of this study was secondary school students, secondary school administrators and TVET college administrators. The researcher targeted a sample of 30 secondary school candidates, 10 secondary school administrators, and 10 TVET college administrators as the study respondents. This amounted to a total number of 320 respondents who were used in the research for the required information.

Sampling Technique

Sampling is defined as "the selection of some part of an aggregate or totality on the basis of which a judgment or inference about the aggregate or totality is made (Amin, 2009). To enhance population validity and eliminate sampling errors, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for the entire population.

Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental is a type of non-probability sampling technique (Charlton, 2007), was used to select the best stakeholder to represent each of the population in this study. In

purposive sampling, researchers select the cases to be incorporated in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their characteristics. Thus, they build up a sample that adequately meets their specific needs (Cohen,Manion & Marrison, 2000).In this study, this method was used to get informed respondents with limited biasness such as the candidate students in the selected secondary schools. These Secondary schools within the vicinity of existing TVET institutions were purposely chosen from the districts of; Amuria, Namutumba, Kiryandongo, Kichwamba, Gulu, Kotido, Mukono, Wakiso, Mpigi and Kampala.

Research Procedure.

The researcher used interview schedules and structured questionnaires to obtain qualitative data from secondary school and TVET college administrators, whereas closed-ended questionnaires were appropriate to obtain quantitative data which was viable for the large group of respondents, such as the students. These research instruments were used to gather data from the secondary school candidate students in the corresponding institutions and TVET colleges. These instruments consisted of structured, closed and open-ended questionnaires, which aimed at analyzing how career guidance awareness about TVET affects the choice of TVET courses by secondary school candidate students. These respondents had the role of producing data regarding: The availability of career guidance information to secondary school candidates on TVET courses in Uganda. The major component in the research instruments was to portray: The Awareness about the TVET course after secondary school.

A pilot study was carried out within which, the data for pre-testing the research instruments was collected from King's College Budo and St. Joseph's Senior Secondary School Naggalama. These were secondary schools around Kampala within the reach of the researcher and with a community representing a variety of characteristics sought by the study. The researcher consulted the specialists in the department and School of Education at Kyambogo University as well as the study supervisors to judge the validity of the research instruments, hence carrying out construct, content and face validity.

To ensure reliability, the research instruments were pre-tested and re-tested using the Cronbach‟s coefficient alpha method of internal consistency, where the items were found to have the coefficient of 0.891, a value which is within the acceptable range. A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and 70 (87.5%) were well managed with the remaining 10 (12.5%) instruments regrettably mismanaged.

Prior to the data collection process, a research proposal was submitted to an ethical review committee at Mbarara University of Science and technology Research Ethical Committee (MUST-REC). This institution was preferred due to its credibility in the field of research ethical review and clearance in Uganda. After the approval of the research protocol, the research committee commissioned an informed consent document, which was used to get consent from the respondents before collection of the data.

The approved research protocol was then forwarded to the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). This body supervises and monitors research activities in Uganda. A clearance from the Ministry of Education and sports (MoES) In Uganda was acquired by the researcher before final approval by the (UNCST) body. The proposal document was then cleared and the researcher permitted to carry out the study.

Data analysis

At the end of data collection, the raw quantitative and qualitative data in the possession of the researcher was sorted, coded and analyzed by the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to generate descriptive analysis. Data was captured/entered using integrated software developed using the Structured Query Language (SQL) platform. The study applied the updated EMIS (Education Management Information System) Client user interface with the softcopy of the questionnaire that captures both numerical and string characters. The researchers used descriptive statistics in form of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations for interpretation in relation to the research question.

IV. Results Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation And Discussion

Respondents Distribution

Regarding the class distribution of secondary school students in the study reveal a fairly balanced representation between senior four and senior six students. Senior four students account for 53.8% of the total respondents, while senior six students make up the remaining 46.2%. This distribution suggests that both categories of secondary school students, those in their fourth year and those in their sixth and final year were actively involved in the research. The inclusion of senior four students, who are at an earlier stage of their secondary education, is important as it captures the perspectives of students who are still in the process of considering their future educational and career choices, whereas senior six students are closer to making decisions about their post-secondary education. This balanced representation allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the career guidance awareness as one of the factors influencing the selection of TVET courses among secondary school students in Uganda.

Presentation of data regarding the availability of Career Guidance Information to Secondary School Candidates on TVET Courses in Uganda

The following section presents the findings related to the major objective of this study, which aimed to investigate the availability of career guidance information to secondary school candidates on TVET courses in Uganda. Data was collected from secondary school students (n=78) and the following were the results in Table 1

Table 1: Availability of Career Guidance Information to Secondary School Candidates on TVET Courses

Career guidance information	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std
Your secondary school carries out diagnostic assessment to identify student's strengths and weaknesses in academic or vocational subjects.	45 (57.7%)	22 (28.2%)	11 (14.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.56	.73
Your secondary school has a career guidance department.	36 (46.2%)	42 (53.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.54	.50
Your secondary school provides information about TVET courses during career guidance sessions.	66 (84.6%)	12 (15.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.15	.36
You can select a TVET course given the information about it at your secondary school.	39 (50.0%)	26 (33.3%)	13 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.67	.75
You will consider selecting a TVET course after your secondary school.	32 (41.0%)	3 (3.8%)	10 (12.8%)	27 (34.6%)	06 (7.7%)	2.64	1.49
You need to be advised about joining a TVET course after secondary school.	2 (2.6%)	3 (3.8%)	6 (7.7%)	12 (15.4%)	55 (70.5%)	4.47	.98
You desire to go to University after secondary school.	11 (14.1%)	67 (85.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4.86	.35
You are offering subjects which lead to TVET courses	11 (14.1%)	21 (26.9%)	18 (23.1%)	24 (30.8%)	4 (5.1%)	2.86	1.16
Basic academic subjects will help you in understanding any course you take after secondary school.	1 (1.3%)	6 (7.7%)	29 (37.2%)	33 (42.3%)	9 (11.5%)	3.55	.85
All students need a TVET skill after secondary school.	15 (19.2%)	0 (0%)	22 (28.2%)	34 (43.5%)	7 (9.0%)	3.23	1.24
Your parents/guardians talk to you about what you will do after secondary school.	13 (16.7%)	11 (14.1%)	0 (0%)	32 (41.0%)	22 (28.2%)	3.50	1.46
Your teachers talk to you about what you will do after secondary school.	49 (62.8%)	29 (37.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.37	.49
Your friends talk to you about what you will do after secondary school.	56 (71.8%)	18 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (5.1%)	1.44	.93
TVET courses can lead you to good employment.	2 (2.6%)	39 (50.0%)	28 (35.9%)	9 (11.5%)	0 (0%)	2.56	.73
Technicians are respected in society	23 (29.5%)	14 (17.9%)	13 (16.7%)	18 (23.1%)	10 (12.8%)	2.72	1.43

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Interpretation of data

Data revealed that the majority of respondents (57.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement that their secondary schools carry out diagnostic assessments to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in academic or vocational subjects, while 28.2% disagreed, and 14.1% were neutral on this matter. Remarkably, no respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. The mean rating of 1.56, with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.73, indicates a consensus among the respondents in leaning towards disagreement. This finding suggests a significant gap in the implementation of diagnostic assessments within secondary schools to help students understand their academic and vocational strengths and weaknesses. The lack of agreement or strong agreement among respondents implies a potential need for schools to enhance their efforts in this area, as such assessments can play a crucial role in guiding students toward suitable career choices, including TVET courses, based on their aptitudes and interests.

In an interview with one of the school administrators, he said:

"We believe in the importance of conducting diagnostic assessments for our students to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, not only in academic subjects but also in vocational areas. This approach allows us to provide tailored guidance and support to help students make informed choices about their educational and career paths. We see it as our responsibility to equip our students with the necessary information to excel in their chosen fields, whether that involves pursuing higher education or entering the workforce directly." **(Head teacher of Secondary School)**

Another one emphasized:

"Our career guidance department plays a crucial role in helping students explore their options after secondary school. We work closely with students to understand their interests and aspirations and guide them toward suitable pathways, including TVET courses. TVET is a valuable choice for many students, and we make sure they have access to information about TVET colleges and courses during our career guidance sessions. Our goal is to ensure that every student leaves our school with a clear vision of their future and the skills they need to succeed." **[Guidance Counselor from Secondary School in an interview]**

The data indicate 46.2% of the participants indicated that their secondary schools have a career guidance department, while a slightly higher percentage, 53.8%, reported that their schools do not have such a department. Notably, no respondents were neutral, and there were no instances of agreement or strong

agreement with the statement. The mean rating of 1.54, coupled with a low standard deviation of 0.50, suggests that opinions were relatively consistent, with a slight lean towards disagreement. This finding indicates a lack of uniformity in the presence of dedicated career guidance departments within secondary schools in Uganda. It highlights an area where some schools have established career guidance resources while others have not, which could impact the accessibility of career guidance information, including information about TVET courses, to secondary school candidates.

The data regarding the provision of information about TVET courses during career guidance sessions in secondary schools indicates a strong consensus among respondents. A significant majority, 84.6%, agreed that their secondary schools provide information about TVET courses during career guidance sessions, while only 15.4% disagreed with this statement. Notably, no respondents were neutral, and no one strongly disagreed. The mean rating of 1.15, along with a low standard deviation of 0.36, reflects the high level of agreement and consistency among participants' responses. This finding indicates a positive aspect of career guidance in secondary schools in Uganda. The majority of students indicated that they receive information about TVET courses during career guidance sessions, which is crucial for informing them about vocational education options. This suggests that career guidance sessions are being utilized effectively to disseminate information about TVET courses, potentially helping students make more informed decisions about their educational and career paths. However, it's essential to ensure that the quality and comprehensiveness of the information provided in these sessions meet the needs of students and align with their career aspirations. This agrees with (Sultana, 2017) who established that adequate career information is essential for guiding students toward suitable courses in TVET during their secondary school years. This guidance significantly influences their activities and lifestyles within the context of their chosen occupations. Given the hands-on and craft-oriented nature of vocational education, students in secondary school may need to make affirmative decisions regarding their talents, which they might not be fully aware of at that stage.

The data regarding students' confidence in selecting a TVET course based on the information provided at their secondary school indicates a somewhat mixed response among respondents. Approximately half of the respondents, 50.0%, agreed that they could select a TVET course with the information available at their secondary school. In contrast, 33.3% were neutral, and 16.7% disagreed with this statement. Notably, no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, and no one strongly agreed. The mean rating of 1.67, accompanied by a relatively high standard deviation of 0.75, suggests that opinions on this matter are somewhat divided and exhibit a certain degree of variability. While a significant portion of respondents expressed confidence in their ability to choose a TVET course based on provided information, the presence of a relatively high percentage of neutrality and disagreement indicates that there is room for improvement in this regard. It's possible that some students may perceive a lack of clarity or comprehensiveness in the information available, which could affect their decision-making process. Therefore, efforts to enhance the quality and accessibility of information about TVET courses in secondary schools may help empower students to make more informed choices about their educational paths.

One of the Administrators at TVET institution said:

"TVET colleges in Uganda offer diverse and practical education and training opportunities for students. We understand that students come to us with various backgrounds and aspirations. That's why we value the diagnostic assessments conducted by secondary schools. It helps us understand each student's strengths and weaknesses, which, in turn, allows us to tailor our programs to meet their needs. We work in close collaboration with secondary schools to ensure a smooth transition for students who choose TVET courses." **[TVET Administrator in an interview]**

The data regarding students' intentions to consider selecting a TVET course after their secondary school education reveals a range of responses among respondents. A significant percentage, 41.0%, indicated that they would consider selecting a TVET course, while a smaller proportion, 3.8%, expressed that they would not consider it. In addition, 12.8% were neutral on this matter, and 34.6% remained undecided. A very small percentage, 7.7%, strongly disagreed with the statement. The mean rating of 2.64, combined with a relatively high standard deviation of 1.49, suggests a notable variability in opinions and a degree of uncertainty among respondents regarding their intentions to pursue a TVET course after secondary school. This variability indicates that factors influencing students' decisions about TVET courses are multifaceted and may depend on individual circumstances, aspirations, and perceptions of TVET education. It's essential to recognize the significance of these undecided and neutral responses, as they may represent opportunities for effective career guidance and information provision to help students make more informed decisions about their educational and career paths, including the consideration of TVET courses. This agrees with Mbudzi (2005) who established that the availability of career guidance information at secondary schools is a guideline tool for a long a clear path to quality teaching and learning process in a TVET institution.

Results regarding the perceived need for advice about joining a TVET course after secondary school highlights a strong consensus among respondents. A substantial majority, 70.5%, strongly agreed that they need to be advised about joining a TVET course. Furthermore, 15.4% agreed with this statement, 7.7% were neutral, and only a small percentage of 3.8% disagreed, with an even smaller percentage of 2.6% strongly disagreeing. The mean rating of 4.47, coupled with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.98, indicates the high level of agreement among respondents. This finding strongly indicates that secondary school candidates in Uganda feel a significant need for guidance and advice when it comes to making decisions about pursuing TVET courses after completing their secondary education. The overwhelming consensus in favor of advice indicates the importance of providing comprehensive and tailored guidance services to assist students in making informed choices regarding TVET education, aligning their skills and interests with career opportunities, and ultimately fostering successful transitions from secondary school to TVET programs.

The data regarding students' enrollment in subjects that lead to TVET courses reveals a diverse range of responses among respondents. Approximately 14.1% strongly agreed that they are offering subjects that lead to TVET courses, while 26.9% agreed with this statement. In addition, 23.1% were neutral on this matter, 30.8% disagreed, and a small percentage of 5.1% strongly disagreed. The mean rating of 2.86, along with a relatively moderate standard deviation of 1.16, indicates a spread of opinions and some degree of uncertainty among respondents regarding whether the subjects they are currently enrolled in lead to TVET courses. The relatively high percentage of neutrality and disagreement suggests that many students may not be fully aware of the link between their current academic subjects and TVET pathways. This finding highlights the importance of improving communication and information dissemination to students regarding the alignment of their chosen subjects with TVET opportunities.

"We've noticed an increasing interest in TVET courses among students, and we believe this is due to the efforts of secondary schools in promoting TVET as a valuable option. It's encouraging to see that secondary schools provide information about TVET colleges during career guidance sessions. This not only helps students make informed choices but also contributes to the growth of TVET education in Uganda. We remain committed to offering high-quality vocational and technical training to students who choose this path." **[Training coordinator at TVET institute in interview said]**

Findings indicate that there is a prevailing belief among respondents that basic academic subjects play a significant role in preparing them for courses they may undertake after completing secondary school. A substantial proportion, 42.3%, strongly agreed that basic academic subjects would help them in understanding any course they pursue after secondary school, while an additional 37.2% agreed with this statement. A smaller percentage, 7.7%, held a neutral position, and only 1.3% disagreed, with an even smaller percentage of 11.5% strongly disagreeing. The mean rating of 3.55, accompanied by a relatively low standard deviation of 0.85, indicates a high level of agreement and consensus among respondents regarding the importance of basic academic subjects in preparing them for future courses. This finding suggests that students generally perceive a strong connection between their foundational academic education and their ability to understand and succeed in various post-secondary courses, including TVET courses. This belief indicates the value placed on a well-rounded academic foundation and its role in facilitating educational and career transitions after secondary school. This agrees with (Zelloth, H, 2014) who noted that it is argued that both career guidance prior to TVET as well as career guidance within TVET can make an important contribution to TVET

Results show that respondents hold varying perspectives on the perceived necessity of acquiring a TVET skill after completing secondary school. A notable percentage, 43.5%, strongly agreed that all students need a TVET skill after secondary school, while an additional 28.2% agreed with this statement. In contrast, 19.2% disagreed with the statement, and 9.0% strongly disagreed. Notably, no respondents were neutral on this matter. The mean rating of 3.23, along with a moderate standard deviation of 1.24, indicates a spread of opinions and some degree of variability in respondents' beliefs regarding the need for TVET skills after secondary school. While a substantial proportion strongly supported the idea, a significant percentage also held opposing views. This finding suggests that there is no uniform consensus among students on whether acquiring a TVET skill is a necessity for all after secondary school. These varying perspectives could be influenced by factors such as individual career aspirations, societal perceptions, and awareness of TVET opportunities.

"The perception of TVET courses among secondary school students and parents is evolving positively. We appreciate that secondary school administrators and career guidance departments are actively engaging with students and parents to highlight the benefits of TVET. Our TVET programs are designed to provide students with practical skills and a pathway to gainful employment. We encourage parents and students to explore TVET as a viable and rewarding career choice, and we are ready to support them in their educational journey." **[TVET administrator in an interview]**

Table 1 shows that there is a range of experiences among respondents regarding discussions with their parents or guardians about their post-secondary school plans. A notable percentage, 41.0%, strongly agreed that their parents or guardians talk to them about what they will do after secondary school, while an additional

28.2% agreed with this statement. In contrast, 16.7% disagreed with the statement, and 14.1% were neutral. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean rating of 3.50, accompanied by a moderate standard deviation of 1.46, indicates a spread of experiences and opinions among respondents regarding parental or guardian discussions about post-secondary school plans. While a significant proportion reported that they receive such guidance and discussions from their parents or guardians, there is also a considerable percentage that may not have these conversations or hold neutral views on the matter. This finding indicates the diversity in family dynamics and communication styles when it comes to educational and career planning. It highlights the importance of fostering open and supportive communication between parents or guardians and their children to help them make informed decisions about their future educational and career paths, including considering TVET courses.

The data in Table 1 suggests that a majority of respondents have had discussions with their teachers about their plans after completing secondary school. Specifically, 62.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that their teachers talk to them about what they will do after secondary school, while an additional 37.2% agreed with this statement. Importantly, no respondents were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean rating of 1.37, along with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.49, indicates a high level of agreement and consensus among respondents regarding their interactions with teachers regarding post-secondary plans. This finding suggests that teachers in secondary schools play an active role in engaging students in discussions about their future educational and career paths. Such interactions can provide valuable guidance and support to students as they consider various options, including TVET courses. It also highlights the positive influence of teachers in helping students make informed decisions about their next steps after completing secondary school, confirming the significance of educators as mentors and advisors in the educational journey.

The data in Table 1 indicates that a significant majority of respondents have discussions with their friends about their plans after completing secondary school. Specifically, 71.8% strongly agreed that their friends talk to them about what they will do after secondary school, while an additional 23.1% agreed with this statement. A very small percentage, 5.1%, strongly disagreed, and 4 respondents (5.1%) were neutral on this matter. The mean rating of 1.44, accompanied by a moderate standard deviation of 0.93, indicates a high level of agreement among respondents regarding their interactions with friends concerning post-secondary plans. This finding highlights the role of peer influence and social networks in shaping students' perceptions and decisions regarding their future educational and career paths, including the consideration of TVET courses. The prevalence of these discussions among friends suggests that peer support and exchange of information play a significant role in helping students navigate their post-secondary options. It also indicates the importance of fostering positive peer relationships and encouraging constructive conversations among students to ensure that they receive well-rounded guidance and support in their decision-making processes. This agrees with (Borchert, 2002)who argued that students require ample information to make sound decisions regarding their careers. This implies that when students possess awareness not only of the existence of TVET programs but also the specific courses offered, along with their respective entry requirements. This knowledge is crucial for making well-informed decisions about enrolling in these programs (Kupsoboi, 2017).

The data in Table 1 indicates that respondents hold varying perceptions regarding the potential for TVET courses to lead to good employment. A small percentage, 2.6%, strongly agreed that TVET courses can lead to good employment, while a larger proportion, 50.0%, agreed with this statement. In addition, 35.9% were neutral on this matter, and 11.5% disagreed. Notably, no respondents strongly disagreed. The mean rating of 2.56, along with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.73, suggests a range of opinions but also a notable degree of neutrality. While a substantial portion of respondents recognized the potential of TVET courses to lead to good employment, a significant percentage remained neutral, possibly reflecting uncertainty or a lack of information on this topic. The absence of strong disagreement suggests that very few respondents out rightly reject the idea that TVET courses can lead to good employment. This finding indicates the importance of providing students with clear and evidence-based information about the employment outcomes associated with TVET courses, as well as the diverse career opportunities that such education can offer.

The findings regarding the perception of technicians' respect in society indicate a range of opinions among respondents. Approximately 29.5% agreed that technicians are respected in society, while 17.9% agreed slightly less, and 16.7% were neutral on this matter. In addition, 23.1% disagreed, and 12.8% strongly disagreed with the statement. The mean rating of 2.72, accompanied by a moderate standard deviation of 1.43, suggests a diversity of perspectives, with a significant portion of respondents expressing uncertainty or disagreement regarding the level of respect afforded to technicians in society. This finding reflects a nuanced perception of the societal value and status associated with technical professions, which may be influenced by various factors such as cultural norms, awareness, and personal beliefs. It indicates the need for initiatives that promote awareness and appreciation of technical careers and the potential benefits of pursuing TVET courses in these fields.

The findings concur with (Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard,Ivan Vianen, 2009) who said that career decision-making process is becoming more perplexing for both adolescents and career guidance/development professionals due to the changing nature of jobs and workplace and the knowledge economy that demands greater intellectual and less physical capacity to stay competitive in the 21st century (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Therefore, making a career decision that is thoughtful and based on one's interests and abilities is important because it will impact career success, family income, and job satisfaction in the future.

Also, (Carson & Reed, 2015) established that career guidance is vital in empowering students to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths. The identified gap in diagnostic assessments within secondary schools resonates with Hierbert & Borgen (2002) who emphasises the importance of adequate career information to guide students toward suitable courses. Moreover, the varied perspectives on societal perceptions of TVET courses, as revealed in the study, parallel to Gaunt (2005) who recognized nature of perceptions regarding technical careers.

Regression analysis

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.300[a]	.090	.078	.96131
a. Predictors: (Constant), Availability of career guidance				

The Model Summary reveals an R value of 0.300, indicating a low to moderate correlation between the availability of career guidance and the selection of TVET courses. Specifically, the R Square value is 0.090, which means that approximately 9% of the variance in students' selection of TVET courses can be explained by the availability of career guidance information alone. The Adjusted R Square of 0.078 slightly refines this estimate by accounting for the number of predictors in the model, confirming that career guidance availability has a modest explanatory power in this context. The Standard Error of the Estimate is 0.96131, suggesting the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line.

ANOVA[a]						
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	6.947	1	6.947	7.517	.008[b]
	Residual	70.233	76	.924		
	Total	77.179	77			
a. Dependent Variable: Selection of TVET courses						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Availability of career guidance						

The ANOVA results further substantiate the significance of the model. The F-statistic is 7.517 with a corresponding p-value of 0.008, which is well below the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the model is statistically significant, and the predictor variable—availability of career guidance—has a meaningful impact on the dependent variable, which is the selection of TVET courses. In other words, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the availability of career guidance information significantly influences secondary school candidates' decisions to enroll in TVET programs in Uganda.

Coefficients[a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.512	.399		3.791	.000
	Availability of career guidance	.403	.147	.300	2.742	.008
a. Dependent Variable: Selection of TVET courses						

The availability of career guidance has a positive and statistically significant effect on the selection of TVET courses by secondary school candidates. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.403) indicates that for every unit increase in the availability of career guidance, the selection of TVET courses increases by 0.403 units, holding other factors constant. The standardized Beta coefficient of 0.300 suggests a moderate positive relationship between career guidance availability and TVET course selection. The t-value of 2.742 and the corresponding p-value of 0.008 confirm that this relationship is statistically significant, as the p-value is less than the 0.05 threshold. The constant (B = 1.512) represents the baseline level of TVET course selection when career guidance is unavailable or at zero. Thus, improving access to career guidance information can significantly encourage students to opt for TVET courses.

Table 3: Tabulation Of Findings

Presentation Of Data	Analysis	Interpretation	Discussion
Mean = 2.61 Standard Deviation = 0.745	There Is A Moderate Level Of Perceived Availability Of Career Guidance Information On Tvet Courses For Secondary School Candidates In Uganda.	The Mean Of 2.61 Suggests That, On Average, There Is A Somewhat Positive Perception Regarding The Accessibility Of Career Guidance Information Related To Tvet. The Standard Deviation Of 0.745 Implies A Degree Of Variability In Respondents' Opinions, Indicating That While Some Participants Might Perceive Sufficient Availability Of Career Guidance Information, Others May Have A Less Optimistic View.	This Agrees With (Sultana, 2017) Who Established That Adequate Career Information Is Essential For Guiding Students Toward Suitable Courses In Tvet During Their Secondary School Years. This Guidance Significantly Influences Their Activities And Lifestyles Within The Context Of Their Chosen Occupations. Given The Hands-On And Craft-Oriented Nature Of Vocational Education, Students In Secondary School May Need To Make Affirmative Decisions Regarding Their Talents, Which They Might Not Be Fully Aware Of At That Stage.

V. Summary Of Findings, Conclusion, And Recommendations

Summary

The study found reveals a gap in the implementation of diagnostic assessments in schools to identify students' academic and vocational strengths and weaknesses. This indicates a need for schools to enhance efforts in providing tailored guidance to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses, which can, in turn, guide them towards suitable career choices, including TVET courses. Regarding the presence of career guidance departments in secondary schools, the findings reveal a lack of uniformity, with some schools having such departments and others not. This discrepancy shows a potential disparity in the accessibility of career guidance information, including information about TVET courses, to secondary school candidates, which may affect their educational and career decision-making.

Also, the study indicates that secondary schools provide information about TVET courses during career guidance sessions. This suggests that career guidance sessions are being effectively utilized to disseminate information about TVET courses, which is vital for informed decision-making. However, it's important to ensure that the quality and comprehensiveness of the information provided meet the students' needs and aspirations. The study found that students expressed confidence in their ability to choose a TVET course based on the provided information. Furthermore, the findings highlight the diverse intentions of students regarding the consideration of TVET courses after secondary school. This variability suggests that factors influencing students' decisions about TVET courses are multifaceted and may depend on individual circumstances, aspirations, and perceptions of TVET education.

Findings strongly indicates that secondary school candidates in Uganda feel a significant need for guidance and advice when it comes to making decisions about pursuing TVET courses after completing their secondary education. In addition, the findings reveal varying perspectives among students regarding whether the subjects they are currently enrolled in lead to TVET courses. This shows the need for better communication and information dissemination to students about the alignment of their chosen subjects with TVET opportunities. The study also delves into the perceived role of basic academic subjects in preparing students for future courses, including TVET courses, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents. This shows the value placed on a well-rounded academic foundation and its role in facilitating educational and career transitions after secondary school. The study found that there is no uniform consensus among students on whether acquiring a TVET skill is a necessity for all after secondary school, with varying perspectives influenced by factors such as individual career aspirations and societal perceptions.

The study found that an increase in the availability of career guidance information in secondary schools is associated with a 1.715 increase in the selection of TVET courses by secondary school students, and this relationship is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This implies that as secondary schools improve the provision of career guidance information, students are more likely to opt for TVET courses. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to prioritize the enhancement of career guidance programs to empower students in making informed decisions about their educational and career paths, with a particular emphasis on promoting TVET courses as a valuable and attractive option for students.

Study conclusion.

The study established that the availability of career guidance information significantly influences TVET course selection by students. The absence of diagnostic assessments in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in academic or vocational subjects in many secondary schools in Uganda indicates the need for enhanced career guidance services. In addition, disparities in the presence of dedicated career guidance departments impact students' access to information about TVET courses. On a positive note, the effective use of career guidance sessions in disseminating information about TVET courses shows their importance. However,

variations in students' confidence in selecting TVET courses based on available information suggest that the quality and comprehensiveness of guidance materials should be improved. These findings collectively emphasize the pivotal role of comprehensive and accessible career guidance programs in empowering students to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths, particularly when considering TVET courses.

Recommendations

In view of the study conclusion, the following recommendations were made;

i. The Ministry of Education should implement career guidance programs in secondary schools, ensuring that dedicated career guidance departments are established in all institutions. This will empower students with the information needed to make informed decisions about TVET course selection.
ii. Ministry of Education and TVET Colleges should collaborate to develop high-quality and accessible TVET information resources that can be disseminated during career guidance sessions in secondary schools. This will ensure that students receive accurate and comprehensive information about TVET courses.
iii. Teachers should continue to actively promote TVET as a valuable educational and career pathway and provide personalized support to students. Encourage open discussions about TVET choices while maintaining a balanced approach to academic progression and alternative pathways.
iv. TVET Colleges and Secondary Schools should enhance communication and collaboration to ensure that students are well-informed about TVET options before and after secondary school. This includes facilitating early exposure to TVET programs and their benefits.
v. Ministry of Education and Stakeholders should conduct awareness campaigns to provide parents with a clearer understanding of the potential career outcomes associated with TVET programs. This will help dispel misconceptions and ensure that parents play a more informed role in their children's TVET course selection.

Areas for Further Study

This study revealed the importance of career guidance in TVET course selection. Further research could focus on assessing the quality and accessibility of career guidance services in secondary schools across different regions of Uganda. Identifying disparities in the provision of guidance resources and their impact on students' TVET choices would shed light on areas needing improvement. Moreover, exploring innovative approaches, such as digital career guidance platforms, could provide insights into how technology can enhance the reach and effectiveness of career guidance services.

To gain a holistic view of the TVET landscape, future studies could track the career trajectories and success stories of TVET program graduates in Uganda. This longitudinal research could assess whether TVET courses indeed lead to sustainable employment and career advancement, addressing the concerns raised by parents in this study. In addition, investigating the role of TVET alumni in promoting TVET as a viable career pathway, including their influence on younger generations' choices, would provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of TVET education in the country.

The Proposed Study Output

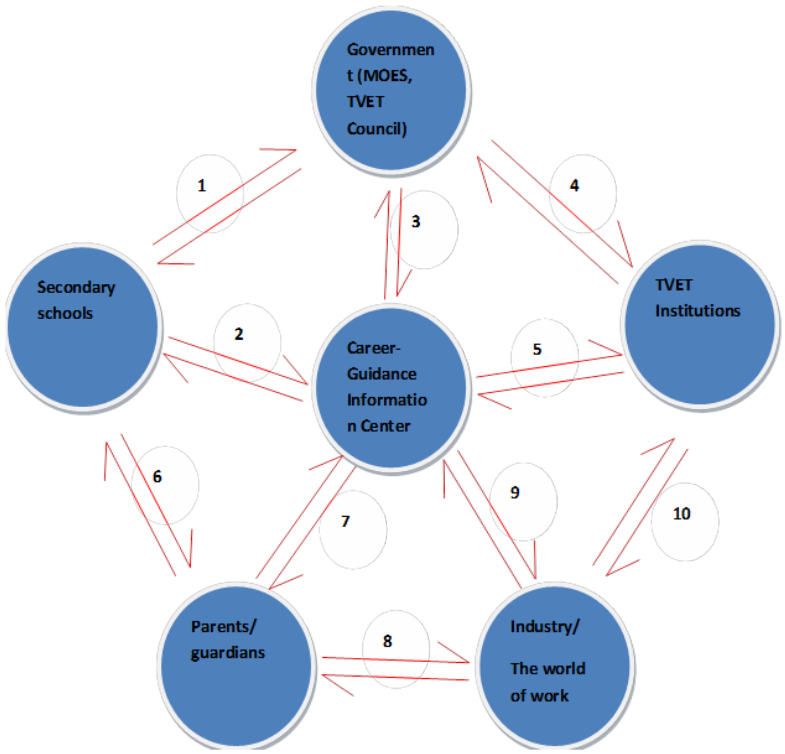

Figure 5.1 A Career Guidance Information Network For TVET And Secondary Schools.

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