Relationship among School Type and Secondary School Students’ Self-Esteem, Academic Achievement and Career Aspirations in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study purposed to investigate how school type was related to self-esteem, academic achievement and career aspirations of secondary school students. Students’ are admitted into different school types based on the criteria of their marks in KCPE. There is a lot of stereotyping on “school labels”. National schools post best KCSE grades, making them institutions of fame and prestige, followed by extra-county, county schools and at the bottom are sub-county schools, producing the bulk of poor grades. The implication is that most students in the last category miss qualification to professional careers. This categorization could affect one’s self-realization, influencing self-esteem, academic achievement and career aspirations. Studies have not adequately addressed this issue. Self-concept Theory by Carl Rogers and Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura guided the study. Nairobi County formed the location of the study. The target population was public students in the form 4 class. There were 79 public secondary schools in Nairobi County at the time of the study (7 were national, 16 were extra-county, 7 were county and 49 were sub-county schools). Cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used to get 12 schools out of the 79 in the former 8 constituencies. From each school, a random sample of 40 students of one form 4 class was drawn (12x40=480 students). The study used correlation design. Questionnaires with standardized scales for students and class teachers were used in data collection. Instrument’s validity and reliability was established during pilot study, using Cronbach alpha. Inferential and descriptive statistical analysis used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Chi-square tested differences in students’ self-esteem between school types. One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and x² tested differences between school type and students’ academic achievement, and also school type versus students’ career aspirations. Analysis for differences in students’ gender and self-esteem used t-test and x². ANOVA tested self-esteem differences and career aspirations for girls and for boys by school type. The level of significance in rejecting the null hypotheses was at p < 0.05. Data presentation used frequency distributions and percentages. The study found a relationship that was significant between school type and self-esteem of students (x² (6) = 456.56, p = .00), academic achievement (f (3,447) =151, p = 0.00) and career aspirations (f (3,447) = 14.69, p =.00). Most of the students from national and extra-county schools had high self-esteem, and aspired for high professional careers compared to majority of sub-county students’ who exhibited low self-esteem and aspired for low-level careers. High self-esteem students had high academic achievement and vice versa. The major conclusion is that, students’ self-esteem differences may influence academic achievement and career aspirations among schools. It is therefore recommended the need to develop self-esteem enhancement and career guidance programmes in secondary schools, more so in sub-county schools. Also, enhance the image of sub-county schools by heavily investing on learning infrastructures and resources. Expand non-academic opportunities of training to cater for rising number of sub-county school students.

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