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Availability of Career Guidance Programs in Public Secondary Schools in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract
This article assessed the availability of career guidance programs in public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania. The article was developed from the first objective of a broader mixed-methods study on career guidance and students' learning habits. Guided primarily by Social Cognitive Career Theory, the study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were obtained from 75 students through questionnaires, while qualitative evidence was collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and 10 school administrators and observations in four public secondary schools. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the availability, frequency, providers, and types of career guidance activities, while qualitative data were analysed thematically and integrated during interpretation. The findings showed that career guidance provision was limited and uneven. Only 18 students (24.0%) confirmed that career guidance services were available, whereas 31 (41.3%) reported that they were unavailable and 26 (34.7%) reported partial availability or were unsure. The frequency of sessions was also limited: 33.3% reported that sessions were rare and 30.7% reported that they never received them. Teachers were the main providers (56.0%), while only 10.7% identified school counsellors. Career talks were the most commonly reported activity (60.0%), whereas individual counselling (20.0%), career information materials (16.0%), and career days or exhibitions (10.7%) were less common. Interview and observation evidence corroborated the quantitative pattern, showing that only one of the four schools had a structured career guidance programme, while two had partial provision and one had no evident programme. The article concludes that career guidance existed in the sampled schools but was not sufficiently structured, regular, professionally supported, or diversified to constitute a comprehensive school-based career guidance system. The study recommends strengthening school-level career guidance structures, allocating dedicated time and resources, and building teachers' capacity while expanding experiential and individualized career guidance activities.

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INTRODUCTION

Career guidance is increasingly regarded as an important component of secondary education because young people must make educational and occupational decisions in a labour market that is changing in its demands, pathways, and forms of employment. Contemporary international evidence indicates that what adolescents do to explore and experience possible futures in work is associated with later educational and employment outcomes, while unequal access to guidance can reproduce differences in opportunity (OECD, 2020, 2024, 2025). The OECD's recent global review further reports that many teenagers experience career uncertainty and that too few students participate in the forms of career development that connect them meaningfully with employers, workplaces, and information about possible futures (OECD, 2025).

Effective career guidance therefore extends beyond occasional advice about occupations. It can include career exploration, individual counselling, exposure to people in work, information about education and training pathways, subject-choice support, mentoring, and opportunities to connect classroom learning with future work. OECD guidance on career talks, for example, emphasizes authentic and frequent interaction with people in work as one useful form of career exploration in secondary education (OECD, 2023). The literature also suggests that systematic provision matters because students' access to guidance is shaped by social and institutional circumstances, and disadvantaged learners may face additional barriers to obtaining useful career information and support (OECD, 2024).

In African education systems, the need for effective career guidance is particularly important because secondary students often make educational decisions in contexts characterized by limited resources, changing labour-market opportunities, and uneven access to information. Where guidance is reduced to occasional career talks, students may receive general information without sufficient opportunities for individual reflection, counselling, mentoring, or practical exposure. Such limitations can weaken the capacity of schools to help students connect their interests and abilities with educational pathways and occupational possibilities. The evidence reviewed in the present study therefore treats career guidance as a school-based support system rather than a single activity.

Tanzania has increasingly emphasized the relationship between education, skills, and changing labour-market needs. The Education and Training Policy of 2014, 2023 Edition provides the current policy framework following its approval in 2023, while the Ministry of Education has also issued revised curricula and related implementation documents. In this context, school-based career guidance is relevant because students require information and support to make informed decisions about subjects, further education, training, and future occupations. However, the existence of a policy direction does not necessarily mean that guidance services are consistently implemented at school level.

The situation in Temeke Municipality provides a useful local context for examining this implementation question. The broader study from which this article is derived investigated career guidance and students' learning habits in public secondary schools in Temeke. Its first objective specifically assessed the availability of career guidance programs. The research report identified career awareness sessions, counselling services, goal-setting activities, exposure to career role models, and career resources as important dimensions of career guidance provision. The article narrows the broader study to the evidence directly addressing whether career guidance programs were available, how regularly they were offered, who provided them, and what forms of activities students encountered.

The purpose of this article was therefore to assess the availability of career guidance programs in public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality, Tanzania. The specific objective was: to assess the availability of career guidance programs in secondary schools in Temeke Municipality.

Literature Review and Theoretical Perspective

Career guidance literature presents provision as a developmental process through which learners acquire information about themselves, educational opportunities, occupations, and pathways into work. Contemporary international evidence stresses that effective systems combine information with exploration and experience. OECD (2020) found that adolescents' thinking about their futures, career exploration, and experiences of workplaces are associated with later employment outcomes. More recent evidence shows that career guidance remains unevenly distributed and that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may have fewer opportunities to engage in meaningful career development (OECD, 2024, 2025). These findings imply that availability should not be judged only by whether a school occasionally provides a career talk; the breadth, regularity, accessibility, and quality of activities are also important.

The form of career guidance offered also matters. Career talks can expose students to occupational information and personal career pathways, especially when speakers describe their education, work experiences, and routes into employment. However, OECD (2023) emphasizes that career talks are most useful when they are intentionally designed and connected to broader career-development opportunities. Individual counselling provides another dimension because students differ in interests, abilities, aspirations, family circumstances, and educational needs. Similarly, career days, exhibitions, workplace exposure, mentoring, and access to career information materials can broaden students' understanding of possible pathways. A school system that relies mainly on one activity may therefore provide information without establishing a comprehensive guidance process.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provides the main theoretical lens for interpreting the findings. SCCT, developed from social cognitive perspectives and advanced in career-development research by Lent, Brown, and Hackett, explains career behaviour through interactions among self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, goals, personal characteristics, and environmental supports. The theory is relevant to school career guidance because guidance activities can provide information, encouragement, role models, feedback, and opportunities that shape students' beliefs about their abilities and future outcomes. The Shakila study explicitly adopted SCCT alongside Goal Setting Theory, with SCCT used to explain the relationship between career guidance, students' beliefs, environmental support, and career development.

From an SCCT perspective, the availability of career guidance is not merely an administrative issue. Schools constitute part of the environment within which students develop career interests, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations. Where students have access to knowledgeable teachers, counsellors, role models, career information, and opportunities to explore occupations, they may receive stronger environmental support for career development. Conversely, limited or irregular provision can restrict students' opportunities to develop informed expectations. The theory therefore helps interpret why the availability and structure of school-based guidance are important even before examining their effects on learning habits or career goals.

Empirical evidence in the Tanzanian context cited in the original study similarly points to weaknesses in the organization of guidance and counselling services. The study reported that earlier Tanzanian research had identified limited and unsystematic guidance provision, shortages of trained personnel, inadequate time, and resource constraints. The present article extends this body of evidence by concentrating specifically on the availability and organization of career guidance programs in four public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality and by integrating student responses with interviews and direct observations.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article draws on the first objective of a broader mixed-methods study conducted in public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The broader study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative evidence were collected to provide complementary information about career guidance and students' learning habits. For this article, the analysis was restricted to evidence concerning the availability of career guidance programs. The target participants comprised secondary school students, teachers, and school administrators. The final sample included 75 students, 10 teachers, and 10 school administrators from four public secondary schools, with students selected through stratified and simple random procedures and teachers and administrators selected purposively because of their direct involvement in guidance provision and school management. Data collection instruments included a structured student questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and an observation checklist. The questionnaire captured students' reports on whether career guidance was available, how frequently sessions occurred, who provided the services, and the types of activities offered. Interviews explored how schools organized guidance, while observations examined visible evidence such as career guidance notice boards, timetables, materials, and student engagement. Quantitative data were summarized using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative information was analysed thematically. Integration occurred during interpretation so that interviews and observations were used to explain and corroborate the patterns in the student responses. The study followed ethical procedures including research clearance, informed participation, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw; the parent study also involved appropriate consent procedures for participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented in relation to the first objective, which assessed the availability of career guidance programs in public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality. The quantitative evidence is consolidated in one table covering four dimensions of availability: presence of services, frequency of sessions, providers, and types of activities. Interview and observation evidence is then integrated into the interpretation of each dimension.

Table 1

Availability and characteristics of career guidance programs in the sampled public secondary schools. Source: Field data, 2026. *Multiple responses were permitted for types of activities

Dimension / Indicator	Response / Activity	Frequency (n=75)	Percentage
Availability of services	Yes	18	24.0%
	No	31	41.3%
	Partial / Not sure	26	34.7%
Frequency of sessions	Weekly	6	8.0%
	Monthly	9	12.0%
	Once per term	12	16.0%
	Rarely	25	33.3%
	Never	23	30.7%
Providers	Teachers	42	56.0%
	School counsellor	8	10.7%
	Guest speakers	6	8.0%
	Multiple providers	12	16.0%
	None	7	9.3%

Dimension / Indicator	Response / Activity	Frequency (n=75)	Percentage
Types of activities*	Career talks	45	60.0%
	Subject-choice guidance	32	42.7%
	Individual counselling	15	20.0%
	Career days/exhibitions	8	10.7%
	Career information materials	12	16.0%
	None	18	24.0%

Availability of Career Guidance Services

Table 1 shows that only 18 students (24.0%) confirmed that career guidance services were available in their schools. In contrast, 31 students (41.3%) reported that such services were not available, while 26 students (34.7%) indicated that services were partial or they were unsure. The results therefore show that the dominant pattern in the sampled schools was not a fully established career guidance system. The relatively large proportion reporting partial availability or uncertainty is also important because it suggests that, even where some guidance occurred, students could not always identify it as a regular and structured school service.

The interview evidence reinforced this quantitative pattern. A teacher from School A described a comparatively structured arrangement:

> *We have a structured career guidance program at our school. Career talks are conducted every month, there are guest speakers from various fields, and we offer individual counseling for those who have difficulty in making decisions related to subject choice and career path. However, there are no proper facilities and materials for conducting such programs efficiently. There is no career resource center, and the career materials are outdated" (Teacher 1, Interview, June 2026)*.

This account implies that even the school identified as having a structured programme faced resource limitations that could constrain the breadth and quality of provision.

By contrast, a teacher from School B explained that guidance was not systematic:

> *The career guidance provided by us is not in a systematic manner. We conduct our career discussions when it comes to class teachers' period or when the students inquire about career options. There is no dedicated counselor for us, and it is managed by our teachers as a part of their responsibility" (Teacher 2, Interview, June 2026*).

This interview helps explain why 41.3% of students reported no availability and 34.7% reported partial or uncertain availability. The researcher interprets these responses as evidence of uneven institutionalization: career guidance was present in some form, but its visibility and structure varied substantially across schools.

Observation provided further corroboration. The study found that only School A had a dedicated career guidance notice board, scheduled sessions, and career guidance materials. Schools B and C lacked dedicated notice boards and materials and did not schedule sessions regularly, while School D showed no evident career guidance activities. This convergence between questionnaire, interview, and observation evidence strengthens the interpretation that career guidance availability was limited across the sampled schools. The pattern is consistent with the broader literature emphasizing that effective career guidance requires systematic school-level provision rather than isolated activities (OECD, 2020, 2024). It also aligns with

the original study's discussion of earlier Tanzanian evidence on limited and unsystematic provision.

Frequency of Career Guidance Sessions

The frequency data indicate that career guidance was not regularly embedded in the school timetable. Only 6 students (8.0%) reported weekly sessions and 9 (12.0%) reported monthly sessions. A further 12 students (16.0%) reported sessions once per term, whereas 25 (33.3%) said sessions were rare and 23 (30.7%) said they never received them. Thus, almost two-thirds of the students either experienced career guidance rarely or did not experience sessions at all. The pattern indicates that availability in principle did not necessarily translate into consistent access.

Interview evidence provides an explanation for the irregularity. A teacher from School C stated that career guidance was not among the school's priorities because of time and resource constraints and that scarce resources were directed toward other academic needs (Teacher 3, Interview, June 2026). A head of School D similarly reported that the school had no formal career guidance programme and focused primarily on academic subjects because of limited time and resources. The head further indicated that students were making subject choices without fully understanding their implications for future careers (Head of School D, Interview, June 2026).

These accounts imply that the problem was not simply the absence of teachers who were willing to advise students; rather, career guidance lacked protected institutional time and resources. The finding is consistent with the OECD's emphasis on the value of systematic and frequent career development opportunities and with evidence that effective guidance systems require structured opportunities for students to explore possible futures (OECD, 2023, 2025). The researcher therefore interprets the low frequency as an organizational limitation that reduces the continuity of guidance, rather than as evidence that teachers do not recognize its potential value.

Providers of Career Guidance Services

Teachers were the main reported providers of career guidance, with 42 students (56.0%) identifying teachers. Only 8 students (10.7%) identified a school counsellor, while 6 (8.0%) identified guest speakers. Twelve students (16.0%) reported multiple providers and 7 (9.3%) indicated that no one provided career guidance. The dominance of teachers suggests that guidance was largely embedded in ordinary teaching and class-teacher responsibilities rather than delivered through specialized career counselling structures.

An interview with Teacher 4 provides an important explanation:

> *I do not have any special training for career counseling but being a class teacher, it becomes my responsibility to counsel the students on the right career path. I use my own experience which is limited and I do not have comprehensive information about the careers available for them (Teacher 4, Interview, June 2026)*.

The statement implies that teachers were filling an important service gap but were doing so with limited specialized preparation and information. This is significant because career guidance involves more than giving general advice; students may require individualized interpretation of interests, educational pathways, occupational information, and changing labour-market opportunities.

The finding also connects directly with SCCT, which recognizes environmental supports and opportunities as part of career development. When specialized guidance personnel, role models, and reliable career information are limited, the school environment may provide fewer opportunities for students to develop informed self-efficacy and outcome

expectations. The finding is therefore consistent with the original study's identification of teacher capacity, time, and resource constraints as barriers to effective guidance provision.

Types of Career Guidance Activities Offered

Career talks were the most commonly reported activity, identified by 45 students (60.0%), followed by subject-choice guidance at 32 students (42.7%). Individual counselling was reported by 15 students (20.0%), career information materials by 12 students (16.0%), and career days or exhibitions by only 8 students (10.7%). Eighteen students (24.0%) reported no career guidance activities. The pattern indicates that career guidance in the sampled schools was concentrated more on general information and advice than on individualized or experiential activities.

The prominence of career talks is not inherently problematic because well-designed talks can give students direct access to information about occupations and educational pathways. OECD (2023) identifies career talks with people in work as a potentially valuable career-development activity, particularly when they are authentic, frequent, and connected to broader guidance processes. However, the relatively low reporting of individual counselling, career days, exhibitions, and career information materials suggests that students had fewer opportunities to personalize or deepen the information received through talks.

Qualitative evidence supports this interpretation. School A was the only school observed to have a career guidance notice board, scheduled sessions, and career guidance materials. Schools B and C had partial and occasional activities, while School D had no evident career guidance programme. This means that the quantitative finding of 60.0% for career talks should not be interpreted as evidence of a comprehensive system. Rather, it indicates that where guidance was available, the most common mechanism was a relatively limited form of information provision.

The pattern also has implications for equity of access. OECD (2024) emphasizes that unequal access to career development can reinforce wider social inequalities, particularly when students have different levels of access to information and support outside school. In the Temeke context, a school-based system that depends mainly on teachers' informal advice or occasional talks may leave students with unequal opportunities to obtain detailed and personalized career information. The researcher therefore interprets the low presence of experiential and individualized activities as a substantive limitation in the breadth of career guidance provision.

Taken together, the four dimensions demonstrate that career guidance programs were available only to a limited and uneven extent in the sampled public secondary schools. The strongest evidence of availability was the presence of career talks, but the broader pattern showed low regularity, limited access to specialized counsellors, insufficient career materials, and relatively few individualized or experiential activities. The qualitative evidence strengthens this conclusion: only one of the four schools had a structured programme, two had partial provision, and one had no evident programme.

The findings can be interpreted through SCCT because the school environment forms an important context for students' career development. A structured guidance environment can provide information, encouragement, role models, feedback, and opportunities to explore possible pathways. In contrast, irregular or absent provision may limit the environmental supports available to students. The findings do not establish that limited guidance caused particular student outcomes; rather, they demonstrate that the institutional conditions necessary for systematic career development were unevenly present.

The results are also relevant to Tanzania's policy context. The Ministry of Education's current policy framework is explicitly concerned with strengthening education in relation to skills and the changing labour market. The observed variation in school-level provision

therefore points to an implementation issue: formal policy direction needs to be accompanied by structures, trained personnel, time allocation, materials, and monitoring mechanisms that make career guidance visible and continuous in schools. This interpretation is consistent with the broader study's finding that the policy expectation for guidance and counselling was not uniformly reflected in school practice.

CONCLUSION

Based on the first objective, the study concludes that career guidance programs existed in the sampled public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality but were not adequately available as structured, regular, and comprehensive school-based services. Only 24.0% of students confirmed availability, while 41.3% reported no availability and 34.7% reported partial availability or uncertainty. Sessions were frequently rare or absent, teachers were the dominant providers, and career talks were substantially more common than individualized counselling, career days, exhibitions, or career information materials. Interviews and observations corroborated the student responses by showing substantial differences across the four schools. Overall, the findings indicate that the central challenge is not simply whether career guidance exists, but whether it is institutionalized sufficiently to provide students with regular, professional, diverse, and accessible career-development opportunities.

Recommendations

First, public secondary schools in Temeke Municipality should establish structured career guidance programmes with designated time in the school timetable, clear annual activity plans, updated career information materials, and mechanisms for monitoring participation. This would help move career guidance from occasional or informal activities toward a predictable school-wide service.

Second, education authorities and schools should strengthen the capacity and support of personnel responsible for career guidance and diversify the activities offered. Teachers who perform guidance roles should receive relevant training and access to current career information, while schools should expand individual counselling, career days, mentoring, interactions with professionals, and other experiential opportunities alongside career talks. Such measures would broaden students' access to career information and provide the environmental support emphasized by SCCT.

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