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Full Length Research Paper

Contributions of cognitive theory to the problem of automatization of grammatical structures in teaching foreign language

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Unlike traditional methods, the communicative approaches draw on implicit and incidental ways of learning and contextualised exercises of grammar which improve language performance in terms of fluency and communicative competence. However, the discursive plan implies the use of high-level units of knowledge and the automatization of low-level knowledge is not ensured. Although learners' production achieves success in terms of communicative skills, their competence in terms of accuracy is usually unsatisfactory. The benefits of explicit grammar teaching are another issue that concerns teachers and that needs more evidence. Therefore, a need exists to study which approach supports the automatization of low-level information, in a short class time (30-40 min). The first purpose of this study is to better understand the cognitive processes that lead to the automatization of forms, the second purpose is to know whether explicit grammar teaching promotes the automatization of forms. When first reviewing the literature on cognitive psychology and automatization, the focus was limited to how automaticity is brought about. Next, the main assumptions of Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT*) and Instance Theories are presented. The reviewed research results confirmed the effectiveness of the explicit teaching of rules and the importance of practice and attention in the language learning process. In the conclusion, there are some recommendations that may be useful for language teachers.

Key words: Automatization, explicit grammar, focus on form, cognitive process.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of foreign language education, grammar instruction has always been a central subject, as one cannot learn a foreign language (L2) without acquiring its linguistic system. However, learning an L2 involves the use of linguistic forms in order to communicate specifically.

In the history of language teaching, each methodology has given more or less importance to the teaching of grammar. "Among the major issues raised by classroom SLA researchers is the controversial question of whether and how to include "grammar" in L2 instruction" (Doughty and Williams, 1998, p. 1). Grammatical competence is

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one linguistic component, like lexicon, syntax and pronunciation. It is defined as "the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognising well-formed phrases and sentences (...)" (CEFR, 2001, p. 113). Clearly, expressing and understanding the meaning of any communication involves the use of grammatical phrases. Therefore, unlike some previous methodologies, in communicative language teaching, the study of grammatical structures is not an objective in itself, but rather is seen as a tool facilitating their use in interaction. The learner, as a "social agent" (CEFR, 2001, p.9), aims to develop his capacity to perform tasks that are not only linguistic, but also cultural, interactional, pragmatic and discursive. From the action-oriented perspective, the focus of a lesson is usually on meaningful communication about the lesson's topic and sometimes it can be on the language itself. At the same time, a student's success is not measured by the correct use of grammatical structures, but rather by their ability to perform a task in the L2. Since from an action-oriented point of view, the forms are at the service of the effective use of the L2 (the communicative competence), it remains to be known, for a language teacher, whether it is better to build his/her course on the forms or on the senses that they convey. In this regard, the CEFR leaves the choice to whoever designs the language course. Languages are based on an organisation of form and an organisation of meaning. The two kinds of organisation cut across each other in a largely arbitrary fashion. "A description based on the organisation of the forms of expression atomises meaning, and that based on the organisation of meaning atomises form. Which is to be preferred by the user will depend on the purpose for which the description is produced. What is clear is that a language learner has to acquire both forms and meanings" (CEFR, 2001, p.116).

Regarding the way in which the formal structures of the language are inserted into the course, the teacher has the choice between implicit or explicit grammar teachings. Implicit grammar is defined as "an approach which avoids any explanation or verbalization of regularities and grammar rules" (Puren et al., 1998, p. 199) (our translation). Besse and Porquier (1991, p. 86) emphasize that "implicit grammar is in fact an unspoken inductive teaching of a particular grammatical description of the target language, and that it therefore relates more to learning than to acquisition" (our translation). In other words, the implicit method does not resort to any metalinguistic explanation. On the other hand, according to the method of explicit grammar teaching, the teacher goes through the clarification of the rules and uses a certain amount of grammatical terminology. Where possible, teachers should make it clear which grammar theory they consider when determining the content of their course (CEFR, 2001, p.114). They should therefore consider several factors such as the teaching/learning objectives, the teaching methodologies adopted, their own teaching experiences, the environment in which

teaching/learning takes place, institutional limits and expectations, the time devoted to teaching/learning, the expectations, the needs, the academic and cultural habits of the learners, and individual factors such as the cognitive abilities, age and competency level of the learners.

It is obvious that learning a L2 as an adult is a different process from learning a mother tongue (L1) as a child. The latter first learns to communicate in his L1 before the period of school, and then it is at school that he/she learns the rules of its operation in an explicit way. However, when it comes to learning a L2, this situation is often reversed. The development of an internalized grammar, which takes place in natural learning settings, finds its place in guided learning activities as a means of ensuring mastery of linguistic forms. In a language class, the teacher will mainly seek to make the language a medium of communication rather than an object to be studied and, for that, he will endeavour to make operations automatic and almost unconscious as soon as they are understood, and even before (Defays and Deltour, 2003, p.207). In natural communicative interactions, the learner is exposed to a large amount of input, as well as a wide variety of vocabulary and structures, and those around him use the language effectively (Lightbown and Spada, 1999, p.93). Therefore, a L2 learner is invited to internalize the grammatical rules after very little contact with the L2.

According to Vigner (2004), grammar teaching has two dimensions: on the one hand, language in its formal dimension (sentence / text), and on the other in its usage dimension (utterance/speech). In this sense, he accentuates "the discrepancy between teaching practices, which start from the enunciative approach, and commercial grammar books, which only provide descriptions of the language. Even grammatical metalanguage appears traditional, although the latest linguistic theories consider the utterance and the communicative approach to be central." L2 Learners should deal with both the meaning and the use of the new forms they discover, since the communicative syllabus offers several speech acts per unit of work (Hilton, 2019, p.31). The discursive context is therefore so large that the learner has difficulties in automatizing the smallest units of the language in term of pronunciation, recognising words and syntactic rules. In current language textbooks, which consider the principles of the action-oriented approach, the grammar is often presented implicitly and is always contextualized while the explicit rules are presented in the part of the textbooks reserved for explanations of grammatical specifications. Stembah (2014, p.65) researched the opinions of six French teachers about the place of grammar in French textbooks. She pointed out the considerable lack of grammatical and training exercises, so that the learner does not have the opportunity to develop certain automatisms which could help him/her

spontaneously produce correct statements without consciously referring to the corresponding grammar rules.

The well-known problem of the automatization of the grammatical system of an L2 illustrates one of the learning difficulties when the contact time with the language is very limited. The presentation of grammar rules in the language classroom can provide declarative knowledge about how the language works, but this declarative knowledge does not necessarily lead to new plans for action (procedural and automatic skills) in a situation of communicative interaction (oral or written) (Hilton, 2019, p.26) In the school context, even when the grammatical rules are explicitly studied and practiced, the available time of the course is too limited for the learner to acquire related skills. A large number of studies which have investigated the effects of explicit and implicit learning reveal that explicit second language instruction is superior to the implicit approach. As Norris and Ortega (2000, p. 500) reported, “on average, instruction that incorporates explicit (including deductive and inductive) techniques leads to more substantial effects than implicit instruction”. Other researchers also argued that approaches which integrate the development of explicit knowledge promote a faster and more efficient L2 learning process (Ellis, 2011; Hulstijn, 2002; Norris and Ortega, 2000; Spada and Tomita, 2010).

Several pieces of evidence prove that many learners are capable of mastering a wide range of explicit grammar rules. In their study, Green and Hecht (1992), for example, asked to the participants to explain grammatical errors to the students of English. The results showed that 85% of participants were able to produce clear explanations. The results of the study carried out by Macrory and Stone (2000) with British comprehensive school students showed that explicit instruction allowed a fairly good understanding of the perfect tense in French “(e.g., they understood its function, they knew that some verbs used *avoir* and some *être*, they were familiar with the forms required by different pronouns, and they were aware of the need for a final accent on the past participle).” DeKeyser studied the automatization of explicitly learned rules of morphosyntax in an artificial language. The results support the model of skill acquisition and show that the practice of grammar rules in one skill (production or comprehension) leads to improvement in the practiced skill (DeKeyser, 2003).

Research in the field of foreign language teaching mostly aims to measure the effect of a certain teaching method or technique. However, it does not consider sufficiently the characteristics of the learning process. In recent years, in cognitive psychology many studies have been conducted and theories have been developed aiming to explain the learning process. Interdisciplinary knowledge transfer is essential in order to adequately benefit from these data. According to Huong (2010, p.138), it is necessary to combine the efforts of cognitive

psychology, linguistics and pedagogy in this field: psychology tries to identify the nature of the operations carried out by the learner, linguistics establishes the descriptions that are essential to the development of exercises, and the purpose of the pedagogy is to build the most favourable procedures for setting up this interaction. Therefore, there is a need for a theoretical study that summarizes and synthesizes these data in order to integrate it into the field of foreign language teaching. The purpose of this study is to help teachers choose more appropriate teaching methods and techniques by presenting information explaining the cognitive process of automatization.

Therefore, this research will address the following questions:

- a. Is it possible to learn and automatize implicitly the rules of grammar, in a limited class time? Or could explicit teaching of these rules optimize learning time?
- b. What is the contribution of the cognitive approach to the automatization of L2 grammar rules?

METHOD

This study aims to highlight the automatization process of L2 grammatical forms. For this purpose, we preferred a narrative review format. The literature review is ordered by thematic research. First, the key terms of the issue were identified: automatization, knowledge processing, explicit learning, declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. These key terms were then researched in databases and websites such as Google Scholar, academia.edu, ERIC. New sources were also acquired by consulting the library and examining the references of relevant books and articles. In the second stage, those articles that were not directly related to the scope of the research were eliminated. In third stage, two new and well-established theories with their strong and weak points were presented: Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT*) and Instance Theory. Finally, the information presented was synthesized, taking into account the perspective of foreign language teaching at every stage. When we shift from a traditional way of presenting language grammar to an adoption of a purely communicative approach, which draws on implicit and incidental ways of learning, the language performance of the learners improves to a great extent in terms of fluency and communicative needs, yet learners' accuracy of language use suffers. In light of previous research findings, analytic syllabuses provide a platform for integrating a focus on language form, which is generally “considered a necessary component of any language teaching paradigm, if native-like proficiency is the goal of instruction” (Révész, 2007, p.25). The focus on form approach consists of inserting explicit knowledge of linguistic forms when it is necessary in a course whose main objective is to communicate and understand the meaning of the utterances. Skehan (1998) claims that learners chances of focusing on form should be maximized through attentional manipulation of task variables in the context of meaningful language use.

Automaticity

According to DeKeyser (1997, p.197), automaticity which is the result (product) of the automatization process, has been one of the topics that has attracted many researchers in the cognitive literature of the last 20 years. Substantial progress has been made, although

researchers do not agree about the exact nature of capacity limitations and the role of attention, about the relationship between automaticity and implicit knowledge, and about how automaticity is brought about. Different researchers employ the term automaticity in different senses. In one sense, it refers to handling utterances quickly and fluently without undue groping, hesitation, or pauses. The greater the automaticity the faster the recognition and production of grammatically correct and communicatively appropriate utterances (Gatbonton and Segalowitz, 1988). In a more psychological sense, automaticity refers to the operation of those mechanisms underlying performance that function quickly, without interference from other on-going cognitive processes, and that draw relatively little or no attention resources away from other concurrent processing activities. Processes become automatic in this sense as a result of a great deal of practice (Schneider and Fisk, 1982; Shiffrin and Schneider, 1977; Gatbonton and Segalowitz, 1988). Automaticity in L2 enables a learner to control utterances with little effort and to devote attention resources to other aspects of speaking such as "matching the timing, tone and rhythm of his utterances to his conversational purpose" or "constructing a larger piece of discourse by expanding on or combining ready-made constructions" (Pawley and Syder, 1983, p.208). Moreover, an advanced level of automaticity seems to lead to near-native performance (DeKeyser, 2001; Hulstijn, 2002). Even though the operations of automatization need to be enlightened by empirical research, DeKeyser (2003) argues that "research in cognitive psychology as well as in second language acquisition suggests that automaticity is best achieved by repeated creative use of the language rules taught in a context of authentic communication."

He proposes a two-phase automatization process. In the first phase, the main activity intends to create in the learners a need to repeat target utterances while transferring authentic messages. The second phase, the follow-up activity, aims to provide more controlled but still communication-based exercises focusing on the target sentences already elicited in the main activity. According to Gatbonton and Segalowitz (1988) the task-based approach allows structured repetition and creative transfer of knowledge items with extensive practice without making use of traditional pattern drills and exercises. "The reason why such large units (communicative drills) of activity are essential for skill acquisition in the sense of automatization is that an important feature of an automated plan is its potential to be called by higher-level plans."

Some data from cognitive theory

According to cognitivists, the learner processes information using a mental mechanism. He learns, integrates, and reuses the knowledge that is built gradually. During the realization of this mechanism, several factors (memory, attention, intention and interaction) come into play to facilitate learning. Cognitive scientists can guide pedagogues in strengthening theoretical bases as well as methodological proposals. They provide important information on:

- a. Human memory for language: declarative and non-declarative knowledge, and the specificities of memory in a foreign or second language;
- b. The communicative and interactional use of language: automatic and caring processes in the co-construction of meaning;
- c. The acquisition of knowledge and skills allowing this dynamic use of language: the reality of explicit and implicit learning (Hilton, 2019) (our translation).

Learning a foreign language is not a simple, mechanical process, due to its multidimensional nature. The learner mobilizes the various knowledge, skills and representations at his disposal in order to appropriate a given L2. From the cognitivist perspective,

three types of knowledge are involved declarative, procedural and conditional/strategic. The first type refers to knowledge that can be formulated verbally to provide proof of its acquisition, for example a date, a theorem, or a law. It answers the question "what?" The second manifests itself through the performances it achieves, for example, playing a musical instrument, driving a car, or tying a tie. It corresponds to the answer to the question "how?" The last type makes it possible to use other two types according to the objectives set and the elements of the situation of communication. It answers the questions "when?" and "why?" (Defays and Deltour, 2003, p.164).

In the literature, there is a great deal of research on how declarative knowledge turns into a skill (procedural knowledge) and different theories aimed to explain the automatization process. We will now explain the most widely recognized model: Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT*).

Adaptativ control of thought (ACT*)

Anderson's Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT*) model (cf., esp. Anderson, 1987) is the most widely accepted theory on how automaticity is brought about. According to this model, knowledge typically starts out as explicit (declarative) information, "knowledge that," which is turned into specialized procedural rules, and "knowledge how," for very specific behaviours through analogy with a series of examples and with the help of very general behavioural rules. It is then fine-tuned over time as a function of cost-effectiveness (probability of being correct and cost in terms of mental resources). The result of this last process is a gradual drop-off in reaction time and error rate (DeKeyser, 1997). This transformation of declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge is called proceduralization. Forms produced as a result of controlled processing at the beginning become automatic as a result of practice and repetition. Later, these automatized forms are stored in the long-term memory and can be recalled when the learner needs them, and this automatized knowledge does not require much attention control. Thus, automatic processes can simultaneously continue to operate and activate complex sets of cognitive skills. To summarize, according to this approach, learning takes place as a result of many repetitions, which causes the conversion of controlled processing to automatic processing. Simple sub-skills and routines need to become automatic before dealing with more complex skills (Mitchell and Myles, 2004, 101). The automatization of controlled processing requires constant restructuring of the linguistic system throughout the foreign language learning process. Anderson (2005) argues that although procedural knowledge governs the performance of fluency, declarative and procedural knowledge can coexist. According to Schneider (1977, cited in Mitchell and Myles, 2004, p.100), after several repetitions, the forms produced at the beginning by a controlled process, become automatic as learning involves a shift from controlled processing to automatic processing in foreign language learning. When this shift from controlled processing to automatic processing through practice occurs, controlled processes are released to process higher levels of processing.

Instance theory of automaticity

The researchers identified some properties in order to define automaticity. Some lists are longer than others, in this study we will consider the list of four properties cited by Logan (1997): speed, effortlessness, autonomy, and lack of conscious/awareness. Speed is one of the most important characteristics of automaticity because an increase in speed provides a decrease in reaction time. An effortless performance apparently is realised easily because it is not

subject to attention limitations. The ability to do another task while performing an automatic one is the second criterion of an effortless performance. Automatic processing is autonomous, in that it begins and continues on to completion without intention. Automatic processing is not available to consciousness while non-automatic processing is, because attention is the mechanism of consciousness and only those things that are attended are available to consciousness (Posner and Snyder, 1975; Logan, 1988). Our performance is automatic, fast and effortless, when memory retrieval is faster than algorithmic performance and involves fewer steps. For example, if we are well-practiced, we type and read words without much awareness of the processing involved in doing so. There is evidence (reviewed above; also see Logan, 1985) that all of the properties of automatic processing change more or less continuously with practice, and it may be that different properties change at different rates. If autonomy develops before effortlessness, then it may be easy to find cases of effortful autonomous processes, like those observed by Paap and Ogden (1981), Regan (1981), and Kahneman and Henik (1981) (Logan, 1997, p.128).

The instance theory explains automaticity as a memory phenomenon rather than a resource limitation. A novice performs a task with a general algorithm, after several repetitions, he/she gains experience and learns specific solutions to specific problems. He/she retrieves these solutions when he/she encounters the same problems again. After several trials, the learner's performance is automatic when it is based on single-step direct-access retrieval of past solutions from memory instead of an algorithm (Logan, 1988). Instance theory assumes that automaticity is memory-based processing and automatization is a shift from algorithmic processing to memory retrieval. Logan assumes that retrieval involves a race between the different traces in memory, such that the first trace to finish governs performance. Thus, when you are asked to produce the sum of $2 + 2$, all of the different traces that represent $2 + 2 = 4$ get retrieved, and you are able to respond as soon as the first one finishes (Logan, 1997).

According to Logan, *episodic memory* (the same type of memory used in daily life) is used in automatization. He argued that each experience with a task lays down a separate memory trace or instance representation that can be retrieved when the task repeats itself. The number of instances in memory grows with the number of practice trials, building up a task-relevant knowledge base (Logan, 1997). The instance theory makes three main assumptions: obligatory encoding, obligatory retrieval and instance representation. Obligatory encoding says that attention to an object or event is sufficient to cause it to be encoded into memory. This assumption provides a learning mechanism. Attention to objects and events in the course of performing a task causes a task-relevant knowledge base to be built up in the memory. According to Logan, it seems that the intention to learn has no effect on learning, except that it guarantees attention to the things to be learned. "Learning and storing seem to be a side effect of attending" (Logan, 1997). "Obligatory retrieval, which says that attention to an object or event is sufficient to cause things that were associated with it in the past to be retrieved from memory, and instance representation, which says that each trace of past objects and events is encoded, stored, and retrieved separately, even if the object or event has been experienced before (Logan, 1988)".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Memory based theories assume that automatic performance is based on retrieval of representations of past solutions from memory. The central questions that pose these theories are "what" gets into" those

representations during learning and what is "taken out" of them during automatic performance. According to Logan et al. (1996), "the distinction between encoding and retrieval is important in understanding the acquisition and expression of automaticity. Automatic performance emphasized speed and so may not be sensitive to things that are retrieved slowly". The longitudinal and fine-grained study of DeKeyser (1997) supported the model of skill acquisition and showed that a large amount of practice of grammar rules in comprehension and production leads to improvement in the practiced skill, that is to say, the results have presented evidence of the skill specificity of the learning process. In summary, processing is considered as automatic when it relies on the retrieval of stored instances which will occur in a consistent environment. It seems that practice (repetition) is important since it allows learners to increase the number of representations as well as the speed of retrieval. Another important key concept is "consistency" because it ensures that retrieved instances will be useful. We can give a positive response to the first research question addressed in the introduction: Could explicit teaching of grammar rules optimize learning time? The research results show that explicit teaching of the language rules enhances their learning. Yet the time allowed to the explicit teaching, the use of metalanguage, and the type of grammatical descriptions depends on various factors related to the teaching settings. The type of exercises used to practice the forms is also important. The rules are learned faster and better if they are repeated in communicative tasks. An intensive use of complex metalanguage tires the student's mind and can be an unnecessary cognitive burden. The second question that was addressed is: What is the contribution of the cognitive approach to the automatization of L2 grammar rules? In order to find an answer to this question, we first explained two basic theories explaining what automatism is and how it is brought about. According to Anderson's ACT* theory, learning involves a shift from controlled processing to automatic processing in a foreign language. Initially, the forms are produced by a controlled process, after much practice, this declarative knowledge will become fully proceduralized and at the end of the process, the skill will become automatic. This theory considers automaticity in terms of processing resources and assumes that automatic processing requires little or no attention. On the other hand, recent theories, such Logan's Instance theory, consider automaticity as a memory phenomenon rather than a resource limitation. A learner's performance is based at the beginning on a general algorithm. After practice, it will become automatic when it is based on single-step direct-access retrieval of past solutions. Instance theory provides us a more details on the automatization process.

These two theories explain the automatization process differently, but what they have in common is that automatization requires a lot of repetition.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three important conclusions can be drawn from research on automaticity. First, the clearest conclusion is that practice is essential to achieve automatization of a skill. However, by “repetition” we do not mean the repetition of grammar rules such as in traditional grammar exercises. We rather mean the practice of them in communicative tasks. Second, a consistent environment is necessary for practice to be effective, because automatic processing will occur only after practice in a consistent environment. Third, the role of attention in learning is major since a task-relevant knowledge base will be built up in memory through attention to an object or event. We think that this sentence of Logan (1997) should always be remembered by students and teachers: “Learning and storing seem to be a side effect of attending.” In order to be effective, analytical approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching, need to be supplemented by some type of grammar instruction. This instruction can be implicit, explicit, inductive or deductive. The task-based approach allows structured repetition and the creative transfer of knowledge items with extensive practice without making use of traditional pattern drills and exercises. Communicative drills allow learners to use large units of communication; while repeating lower-level information, the learner practices using declarative knowledge which becomes at the end automatic. Focus on form is an approach which aims simply to use these forms in communicative activities. What is important in this regard is to emphasize the relationship between form and meaning and to show that forms are mediators for communicating and conveying meanings. Automaticity refers to fluency as well as the accuracy of the production of learners. The research results provide evidence about how automaticity is brought about, about the capacity limitations and the role of attention. However, the issue of automatization of grammar rules through practice in productive and receptive skills needs to be supported by empirical studies. The relation between the grammar activities and their long-term consequences needs to be discovered. Future research could examine the effect of practice time on the automatization of grammatical forms. The relation between automatization and grammar teaching types needs to be examined in detail: explicit-inductive vs. explicit-deductive and implicit-inductive vs. implicit-deductive. Additionally, which grammar categories (articles, adjectives-subject agreement, plural forms, etc.) are best learned explicitly or implicitly should be investigated. Moreover, the role of learners’ learning styles in automatization could be investigated to clarify which learners profit best from the explicit teaching. Finally, learners’ characteristics such as motivation level and predisposition to self-learning can affect their achievement and therefore, the automatization process. On the other hand, the effect of different variables such as types of teaching materials and learning activities on

attention and perception need to be investigated. In summary, attention and practice seem to be key terms in the language learning process.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Entrepreneurial skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State, Nigeria

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This study examined the differences between the responses of federal and state universities on entrepreneurial skills required for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. Specifically, the study examined the difference between the responses of federal universities and state universities on planning skills, marketing skills and management skills on the business education graduates' employability in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population of this study consists of 2,575 business education students in the two public universities in Calabar. The sample of this study consists of 256 business education students drawn from the department of business education of the two public universities in Calabar, representing 10% of the total population. The results of the analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between students of the two universities. Findings also revealed that there is significant difference between students of the two universities on marketing skills and business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that teachers should include activities that will enhance planning skills of students.

Key words: Entrepreneurial skills, employability, planning, management skills.

INTRODUCTION

An entrepreneur is someone who has innovative ability, creates something new and different, seeks opportunities, starts a business, takes risks, develops ideas and manages available resources to succeed. Entrepreneurs are agents that overcome obstacles to build their enterprises in an entrepreneurial relationship by being change agents through recognition of opportunities, exploring it through innovation and creativity (Okute,

2020). Anyone who has the knowledge, skills and possess such personal qualities, attitudes, values, and behaviors necessary to perform activities and task to be self-reliant is known as an entrepreneur. The core of entrepreneurship is to create new values, which enhances different creative thinking and innovative actions as well as create opportunities needed in the society. It is needful for an entrepreneur to be competent because customers

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are looking for satisfaction which cannot be achieved without it.

Competency underlies the authors understanding and interpretation of many day-to-day educational practices, including most recently entrustable professional activities (Zubin, 2019). Competencies are assessed in terms of actual behavior observed in the workplace and are usually defined in terms of underlying personal characteristics like traits, knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individual managers. Entrepreneurs and managers share similar roles and tasks in many aspects like organizing and planning competencies. In recent years, the competency approach of business education students has become an increasingly popular means of studying entrepreneurial characteristics.

Entrepreneurial competencies of business education students could contribute to economic welfare as they increase the innovative capacity of the economy. This is acquired through entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship Education reduces the high level of rural-urban migration, to offer functional education for the people that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant, to provide the youth adequate training that will enable them to be more creative and innovative in identifying noble business opportunities (Akeke and Eyo, 2018).

Moreover, through entrepreneurship, new businesses and jobs are created, which is of critical importance in today's global business environment. Adding to this, Low and MacMillan (2018) viewed that new firm's creation is a critical driving force of economic growth, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs, as well as enhancing federal and local tax revenues, boosting exports, and generally increasing national productivity. Entrepreneurial competency aimed at identifying the characteristics of a good and effective entrepreneurial so that organizations can be successful. Strategic planning competencies relates to setting, evaluating and implementing the strategies of the firm, while calling for abilities and skills from a broader and long-term perspective. Another type of competency business education students should possess for effective business management is opportunity competencies. The most distinguishing competencies for the entrepreneur is the competency which is related to the opportunity available for him to change the world. For instance, McClelland (2017) finds "to see and act on opportunities" as one of the competencies for successful entrepreneurs. This category of competencies comprises of the entrepreneurial activities in spotting opportunities, actively seeking new opportunities, and developing the opportunities which makes it a must acquire virtue for business education graduates.

Business education is a branch of education that involves teaching the skills and operations of the business industry. This field of education occurs at multiple levels, including secondary and higher education

institutes. Education in business has many forms, mainly occurring within a classroom of a school. A business education has many components, as there are many different areas of the business industry as a whole. An education in business varies greatly in its curriculum and popularity around the world. Career development is often an integral part of an education in business. Business education generally refers to the plethora of courses designed to provide students with any number of skills needed for success in business, especially those related to launching and running businesses.

Business educators play a prominent role in preparing students to become responsible citizens, capable of making the astute economic decisions that will benefit their personal and professional lives. Business education teachers introduce students to the basics of personal finance, the decision-making techniques needed to be wise consumers, the economic principles of an increasingly international marketplace, and the processes by which businesses operate. In addition, these standards provide a solid educational foundation for students who want to successfully complete college programs in various business disciplines. The standards are based on a vision and a set of competencies designed to prepare students to become knowledgeable and ethical decision makers as they fulfill their roles as consumers, workers, and citizens (Okolo, 2015). It is based on this premise that the researcher intends to examine entrepreneurial competencies required by business education students in University Calabar, Nigeria.

Strategic competencies refers to well planned, premeditated, tactical and calculated business skills an entrepreneur requires to enable him manage his business effectively. There are required for sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations. Business education students are expected to be strategic in their quest for a successful business. Every entrepreneur will not succeed without strategic competencies. Because each level of responsibility has its own requirements, competence can occur at any stage of his or her business. In the same manner, strategic competencies acquired by entrepreneurs would help them lead a successful and responsible business and would help them sustain and grow their new businesses once developed.

Creative and innovative process constitutes strategic competencies. This can only be done by people who have a passion and an entrepreneurial attitude, namely: those who believe themselves (confident, optimistic, and full commitment), initiative (energetic and confident), has the achievement motive (oriented results and future), leadership (dare to be different), and willing to take risks with the full calculation. Strategic entrepreneurial competencies are also the attitude and behavior of people in addition to innovative, initiative, able to take risks, behave anticipatory, and profit-oriented. Strategic

competence is an essential entrepreneurial competence undertaken by entrepreneurs such as: planning of activities to be carried out and execution of activity on step by step process of achieving the goals of a business organization. In fact, these skills enhance the employability of graduates and as such an important tool for the success of an entrepreneur. Employability skills according to Ajuluchukwu and Osakwe (2019) are range of abilities or competencies that one may develop during one's life through education, training, work experiences interest and extra-curricular activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is apparent that small and medium-sized enterprises play an important role in developing economies of nations, with a focus on the micro to small enterprises (Leithy, 2017). In a study carried out by Abdulkareem (2016) who investigated the differences in entrepreneurial competencies and effective business management among business education students in Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Sokoto State which employed cross-sectional design, a sample of 235 students consisting of 115 male and 120 females was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used was interview questions and a questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Skills and Effective Business Management Questionnaire (TTSPLOQ). The data collected were analyzed using one-way (ANOVA) and tested at varying degrees of freedom. It was discovered that there exist difference in entrepreneurial skills and effective business management among business education students.

In a study conducted by Ekpo (2016) on strategic competencies in managing their businesses, the overall result indicates a significant relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and business growths business education students. A successful entrepreneur should be visionary enough to see his established firm's goals and objective being attained. He/she should be able to identify the opportunities and act on to capture those opportunities utilizing a set of Entrepreneurial Competencies. He/she should be able to lead his established enterprise through the path towards success. In a study by Ekop (2014) on the relationship between; entrepreneurship skills and business growth of business education students in the University of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State. The results showed that 56% of those sampled have strategic competencies in managing their businesses. The overall results indicate a significant relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and business growths business education students. Creating strategic entrepreneurial competencies model requires small and medium-sized enterprises to play an important role in developing the economies of nations as literature reveals. A successful entrepreneur should be visionary

enough to see his established firm's goals and objective being attained. He/she should be able to identify the opportunities and act on to capture those opportunities utilizing a set of Entrepreneurial Competencies. He/she should be able to lead his established enterprise through the path towards success. This requires the entrepreneur to establish a set of business and management competencies, and in order to do so, he/she should be able to select the right team to help him achieve the goals, which requires the Entrepreneur to have some level of strategic competencies to be developed. Throughout the life of his newly established enterprise, he/she will need to sell his ideas to different stakeholders, which requires him/her to have a certain level of business development and conceptual and relationship competencies. Strategic competence indicates sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations, because each level of responsibility has its own requirements.

Marketing skills are skills applied to traditional marketing functions like advertising, sales, promotion, public relations, marketing research and brand management. These skills are highly valued by entrepreneurs in almost all sectors of the economy and job market. An entrepreneur is expected to persuade the public of the quality of his/her brand, thereby ensuring the product sells. In all cases, entrepreneurs need to assess and understand the needs and preferences of stakeholders and persuade others to take appropriate action. Promoting any product, service, or idea encompasses many different marketing skills and personal qualities. The process begins with analyzing the audience and defining their perceptions of the product, service or idea. Identifying those features or aspects of what you are marketing that will be most appealing to your audience is essential. Verbal, writing and public speaking skills, when refined, will help the entrepreneur to convey the pitch clearly, and creativity will help to capture the attention of the audience.

Comparing marketing skill and human relations competence and how they influence entrepreneurial productivity in Northern Senatorial District of Ondo State was done by James (2015). The study adopted descriptive design. Stratified random sampling technique was used in drawing sample for the study. A sample of 200 young entrepreneurs was selected from the population 2674 entrepreneurs. It was discovered that the marketing competence had higher mean than human relations competence and a significant difference was found between the two methods. It found also that marketing competence significantly influence entrepreneurial productivity. This implies that business education students are expected to have both human relations competence and marketing competence for them to be able to run their own businesses upon graduation.

Similarly, Ibrahim and Mohammed (2015) examined the

acquisition of marketing skills and entrepreneurs' abilities to run their own businesses successfully in Yola Adamawa State, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of 7720 entrepreneurs in the area of study. A sample of 250 entrepreneurs was drawn from the population using stratified random sampling technique. Correlation analysis was carried out to ascertain the relationship between the two variables. The results indicate a significant relationship between acquisition of marketing skills and entrepreneurs' abilities to run their own businesses successfully.

Through literature reviewed and SME input, the researchers were able to identify several competencies that contribute to achieving Entrepreneurs Success. The statistical results show two most significant competency groups impacting the Entrepreneurial success: Human Relations Competencies affecting three distinct success dimensions: Ability to attract outside capital, growth in revenues and growth in customer base. While the second was the Business and Management Competencies affecting three distinct success parameters: ability to attract outside capital, growth in revenues and providing value added product or service towards creating an entrepreneur competencies model. It was also observed that marketing competence of an entrepreneur play a significant role in effective business management among entrepreneurs. Micro and small-sized enterprises are created and fostered by new businessmen that enjoy the vision, the energy and the courage to create a new business, support and grow their businesses. Business education students have certain characteristics, traits and competencies that enable them see the opportunities, are courageous enough to help themselves enter a market full of rivals, and visionary enough to be distinguished from their competitors in a world of aggressive businesses approaches to consumers.

Statement of the problem

The issue and rate of unemployment is quite alarming. More than half business education students graduating from the universities each year are left without job and most of them lacks employability skills needed to perform in the employment market thereby exposed them untold poverty and hardship. Unemployment has been of great concern to parents, government, international bodies, and non-governmental organizations. Despite all effort of the government, parents, international organization programmes, and non-governmental organizations to cushion the high rate of joblessness, yet, unemployment is recorded yearly. As a result of this, it becomes necessary to find out the causes of such level of unemployment among graduates particularly business education graduates. One wonders if the situation is a result of lack of the requisite skills for employability such as strategic planning skills, marketing skills, business

management skills. Business management is also considered here because the researchers observed that some of these graduate cannot even run their own business. Several researches had suggested that students' manpower development seem to yield little or no result. International organizations keep sending monies to Africa in an attempt to ameliorate the increasing effect of joblessness. The problem of this study could be posed as; do entrepreneurial competencies enhance business education students' skills in business operation? Hence, this study is geared toward investigating entrepreneurial competencies required by business education students in public Universities in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine entrepreneurial skills required by business education students in public Universities in Cross River State. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the difference between the responses of:

- 1) Strategic planning skills required by business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.
- 2) Marketing skills required by business education graduates' employability in Cross River State
- 3) Business management skills required by business education graduates' employability in Cross River State

Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to direct the study;

- 1) What is the difference between federal university and state university students' responses on strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State?
- 2) What is the difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State?
- 3) What is the difference between federal university and state university students' responses on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are stated to guide the study;

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on

Table 1. Independent t-test analysis of difference between federal university and state university students' responses on strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State (n = 258).

Variable	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	Critical r	r-cal.
Federal University students	111	18.792	2.767	256	1.968	1.964*
State University students	147	17.088	3.068			

Significant at 0.05.

strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between federal university students and state university students on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was survey research design. Survey research design is the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. The design was considered most appropriate because it is directed toward determining the nature of the situation as it exists at the time of investigation. The area of the study is Cross River University of Technology and University of Calabar, Calabar Campus. The population of this study consists of 2,575 business education students in the two public universities in Calabar. The sampling technique adopted for this study was simple random sampling. Simple random sampling was most preferred because it gives every member of the population equal chance of being selected. The hat and draw method (balloting) was adopted. 128 business education students were drawn from each university giving a total sample of 256 business education students randomly drawn from the departments of business education of the two public universities in Calabar, representing 10% of the total population. The instrument used for this study was a well-structured questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Skill and Business Education Graduates Employability Questionnaire (ESBEGEQ). The 24-items questionnaire was structured on a modified four point likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree and eight items for each variable. Independent t-test was adopted for data analysis.

RESULTS

The three hypotheses were analyzed using independent t-test and tested at 0.05 level of significance and 256 degrees of freedom. The results are presented in Tables 1 to 3.

Hypothesis one (H₀₁)

The result in Table 1 showed that the calculated t - value

of 1.964 was less than the critical t - value of 1.968 when tested at 0.05 level of significance and 256 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was retained. This implies that there no is significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

Hypothesis two (H₀₂)

The result in Table 2 indicate that the calculated t - value of 2.211 was greater than the critical t - value of 1.968 when tested at 0.05 level of significance with 258 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

Hypothesis three (H₀₃)

The result in Table 3 indicates that the calculated t - value of 3.229 was greater than the critical t - value of 1.968 at 0.05 level of significance and 256 degrees of freedom. By this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, there is significant difference between federal university and state university students' responses on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State.

DISCUSSION

There is no significant difference between strategic planning skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. This finding suggest that students from the two university of the view that strategic planning skills could impact on business education graduates' employability equally. This agrees with the study carried out by Abdulkareem (2016) who investigated the differences in entrepreneurial competencies and effective business management among business education students in Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto, Sokoto State which employed cross-

Table 2. Independent t-test analysis of difference between federal university and state university students' responses on marketing skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. n = 258.

Variable	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	Critical r-	r-cal.
Federal University students	111	21.434	5.205	256	1.968	2.211*
State University students	147	20.123	4.163			

Significant at 0.05.

Table 3. Independent t-test analysis of difference between federal university and state university students' responses on business management skills for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. n = 258.

Variable	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	Critical r	r-cal.
Federal University students	111	20.529	4.583	256	1.968	3.229*
State University students	147	18.669	4.591			

Significant at 0.05.

sectional design, a sample of 235 students consisting of 115 male and 120 females was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used was interview questions and a questionnaire titled: Entrepreneurial Skills and Effective Business Management Questionnaire (TTSPLOQ). The data collected were analyzed using one-way (ANOVA) and tested at varying degrees of freedom. It was discovered that there exist difference in entrepreneurial skills and effective business management among business education students.

This finding is in consonance with the finding of Ekpo (2016) whose finding indicated that 56% of those sampled have strategic competencies in managing their businesses. The overall results indicate a significant relationship between entrepreneurship competencies and business growths business education students. A successful entrepreneur should be visionary enough to see his established firm's goals and objective being attained. He/she should be able to identify the opportunities and act on to capture those opportunities utilizing a set of Entrepreneurial Competencies. He/she should be able to lead his established enterprise through the path towards success. This requires the entrepreneur to establish a set of business and management competencies, and in order to do so, he/she should be able to select the right team to help him achieve the goals, which requires the Entrepreneur to have some level of strategic competencies to be developed.

Again, James (2015) who compared marketing competence and human relations competence and how they influence entrepreneurial productivity in Northern Senatorial District of Ondo State, found out that that marketing competence significantly influence entrepreneurial productivity. It was further discovered that there exist difference in entrepreneurial skills and effective business management among business

education students.

Conclusion

This study investigated entrepreneurial skills and business education graduates' employability in Cross River State. Entrepreneurial skills such as planning skills, marketing skills, management skills and others are requisite skills to enable individuals to perform in any trade. It helps in running and managing personal business, and also serves as an employee. Entrepreneurial skills are regarded as employability skills because there are those demonstrable skills and the technical know-how skills that an employer want to see in the employees. From the results of this study, it has been established that there is significant difference between the responses of students on entrepreneurial skills required for business education graduates' employability in Cross River State from the two universities studied.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) Strategic planning is an essential skill for business education graduates' employability. Hence, teachers should include activities that will enhance planning skills of students.
- 2) Every business education student should be made to carry out mini project that will expose them to practical marketing activities capable of improving their employability level in the area of marketing.
- 3) Students should be engage in learning activities that will exposed them to practical business management

skills needed for a successful entrepreneurs upon graduation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Students' perceptions of the impact of guidance and counselling programs on academic needs satisfaction in secondary schools within the Rift Valley Region, Kenya

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Guidance and counselling is increasingly becoming an important service in secondary schools in Kenya and the world at large. The needs of learners in secondary schools are constantly changing as the society is changing paving way for counselling services to be up scaled to address both academic and other issues. The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of students on the impact of guidance and counselling on academic needs. The research study was guided by Gestalt theory of perception and the Ex Post Facto research design was adopted for the study. The target population was all secondary students within Rift Valley Region and ten schools were selected from five counties through stratified and simple random sampling. Four hundred and fifty students were selected. Data collection was done using questionnaire which was validated by experts in counselling; it has a reliability index of 0.89 which was appropriate. Data analysis was done descriptively and inferentially. The study concludes that there is a connection between the provision of guidance and counselling services and the satisfaction of academic desires. Additionally, the workload for teacher counselors should be reduced for them to find time to address students' academic and other personal needs. The study recommends multiple approaches to implementation of counselling programs in school set up involving many actors such as counselors, principals, subject teachers among others.

Key words: Perception, guidance, counselling, satisfaction, academic needs.

INTRODUCTION

Counselling program in secondary schools in Kenya is a critical service that is intended to contribute to the holistic growth of learners while in schools and even beyond. The students' needs may include but not limited to academic, spiritual, social, careers, cognitive, behavioral and

personal. A satisfactory counselling program aims at dealing with these needs which keep varying based on the changing patterns of the society, not only in Kenya but the world over. For schools which have embraced and facilitated effective counseling programs they can

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attest the results of this worthy area of educational service.

Dondo (2004) and (Gross, Capuzzi 2001) allude that the areas in which counseling is needed in schools include handling traumatic experiences, relationships, orientations issues, academics, vocation, sickness, bereavement among others. In an effort to deal with students' needs Dondo (2004) outlines the qualities of a guidance and counselling teacher as keen listener, approachable, having fair judgment, trust worthy, keen observer, emphatic, understanding, organized and having good relations with learners. Guidance and counselling has also been found to be good for learners' academic improvement (Siahi and Maiyo, 2015).

According to Cheruiyot and Simatwa (2016) increased provision of counselling services leads to enhanced students' academic performance while Tina and Ugochukwu (2014) postulate that Guidance and counselling has not been effective in academic achievement because of heavy workload on the part of teacher counselors implementing the services. Eremie and Jackson (2019) found that guidance and counselling services indeed enhances students' academic achievement and needs. In a study conducted by Shehu et al. (2021) eighty percent of the respondents reported that there was a positive change in their academic performance after they received counselling support and that the performance was good.

Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) emphasized specific services within the broad area of guidance and counselling designed to aid in satisfying academic needs of learners such as good study skills, choice of subjects, motivation on academics, time and stress management, academic improvement initiatives. In addition Ebizie et al (2016) included post-secondary planning, use of library, techniques of passing examinations, handling discipline, overcoming learning difficulties, class counselling among others.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of students concerning the impact of guidance and counselling programs on academic needs of students in secondary schools in Rift Valley Region.

METHODOLOGY

Ex post facto research design was considered suitable for this study. Coolins (1994) asserts that this design involves looking back after the fact to relate the measure of dependent variables to the independent variable. Ex post facto design was relevant due to the fact that the researcher looked at the variables as they were without manipulation. Ten secondary schools were selected from 500 schools across five counties in the Rift Valley Region using stratified sampling method. The secondary schools were categorized into private and public as well as boarding or day, single or mixed. Each county had two secondary schools that were selected.

The students who took part in the study were 169 females and 231 males where 119 (30%) students came from form three, 109 (27%) from form two, 91 (23%) from form four form ones were 81 (20%). Participants were further classified based on their school

category, where 158 were from mixed schools, while 113 from boarding, 58 from day schools and 71 came from single schools (boys or girls only).

Learners in the randomly selected schools responded to questionnaires regarding their views on the satisfaction of the Counselling programs towards their academic needs. Class register was used to identify respondents that formed the sample in every class. The choice of Form two, three and four was necessary to look at whether perceptions varied based on class levels of the students. It was also necessary to look at counselling experiences in each form regarding academic satisfaction as perceived by students. Pilot study was conducted to check the reliability of the students' questionnaire which was assessed using internal consistency method and the reliability coefficient of 0.893 was established that was considered high enough. Expert judgment from lecturers in the Department of Educational psychology, Moi University was sought to assess content validity of the questionnaires. Scoring of the instruments was done to establish perceptions of students where satisfaction of the guidance and counselling program was indicated by a mean value of 2.5 and above; while uncertainty or neutral perceptions ranged from between mean values of 1.8 to 2.4 and finally dissatisfaction or negative perception was indicated by a mean of below 1.7.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected were analyzed using t test to test the hypotheses that stated that there was no significant impact of school type and gender of the respondents on guidance and counselling on academic needs; while Anova was performed to test the hypotheses that stated there were no significant impacts of class levels, school category and age of learners on guidance and counselling on academic needs. The first part was an overview of perceptions of students on the impact of guidance and counselling on academic needs (Table 1).

Table 1 indicates that thirteen items registered positive perception while seven gave neutral perception on the impact of counselling on academics. A cursory view on these results is that the student's perception tends towards positive perception, meaning the impact is satisfactory in enhancing academic needs. It was expected that the program will score highly especially that academics is the core of any school program. Positive perception was noted on orientation of new students, school rules and regulations, motivation of weak learners, enhancing discipline for academic improvement, drugs and substance abuse prevention, techniques of passing examination, setting educational goals, academic improvement initiatives, choice of subjects, good study skills and motivational talks to students, motivating weak learners, overcoming learning difficulties. Uncertain responses were registered in counselling for each class, post-secondary school planning, talents recognition, use of library, stress management skills. The items score on the impact on academics' ranges between means of 2.41 to 2.78, which gives an impression of guidance program affecting academic behaviors of students. These items are the core areas in a guidance program targeting academic

Table 1. Overview of perceptions regarding academics needs (N=400).

Guidance and counselling on:	Mean	Nature of perception
Good study skills	2.66	Positive
Orientation on the various subjects	2.59	Positive
Motivation talks on academic	2.78	Positive
Study skills/time management	2.63	Positive
Stress management skills	2.23	Uncertainty
Academic improvement initiatives	2.53	Positive
Setting personal educational goals	2.67	Positive
Use of library	2.29	Uncertainty
Techniques of passing exams	2.59	Positive
Talents recognition	2.39	Uncertainty
Choice of subjects	2.50	Positive
Orientation of new students	2.40	Uncertainty
Needs of physically challenged learners	2.23	Uncertainty
Post- secondary planning	2.19	Uncertainty
Drug abuse prevention	2.60	Positive
Disciple for academic achievement	2.75	Positive
Overcoming learning difficulties	2.50	Positive
Motivating weak learners	2.50	Positive
Counselling for each class	2.3	Uncertainty
School rules and regulations	2.78	Positive
Overall mean	2.5	Positive

Table 2. Gender and perceptions of guidance and counselling on academic needs.

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	233	2.50	.38
Female	167	2.51	.34
Independent sample test	t	df	sig, (2 tailed)
Equal variances assumed	-151	398	.880
Equal variances not assumed	-154	.377	.878

needs, meaning the program is very visible in these schools though it needs re-engineering and refocusing to meet ever increasing needs of learners in secondary schools. The overall mean statistic of 2.50 showed that the students were generally satisfied with the impact that guidance and counselling has had on their academic needs.

From the findings male and female students had somewhat similar perception on the impact of counselling on academic needs based on their mean scores; however it is noteworthy that there was no significant difference in students' views of counselling on academic needs by gender as shown in Table 2. The study findings therefore indicate that gender did not significantly influence their perception on the satisfaction of academic needs. Their perception was similar irrespective of gender.

These results show that there is no statistically significant difference in perception between students in public and private schools on the impact of counselling

program on academic needs. The null hypothesis was therefore supported and concluded that the type of school did not significantly influence the perception of the students. Their perception was more or less the same whichever school they came from (Table 3).

Table 4 indicates that there is a significant statistical difference on the impact of guidance and counselling on students' academic needs by boarding school category, that is mixed, single, boarding school $F(3,396)=4.328, P=.005$. From these findings the null hypothesis that the category of school has no significant impact on students perception on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling on their academic needs satisfaction is rejected, implying that the category of school where the students learn significantly affects their perception on needs satisfaction. Boarding school's category had more positive perception than the other school categories. Boarding school students were more satisfied than other students on the role of guidance and counselling.

Table 3. Type of school and the perception on academic needs.

Type of school	N	Mean	
Public	240	2.52	
Private	160	2.48	
Independent sample test			
	t	df	sig, (2 tailed)
Equal variances assumed	1.095	398	.274
Equal variances not assumed	1.098	.377	.273

Table 4. School category and the perception of academic needs satisfaction.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	1.632	3	.54	4.328	.005
Within groups	49.779	396	.126		
Total	51.411	399			
(I)Category	(J)Category	Mean difference		sig.	
	Boarding	0.15*		0.001	
Mixed	Day	-0.01		0.940	
	Single	0.02		0.685	
Boarding	mixed	-0.15*		0.001	
	Day only	-0.15*		0.010	
	Single	-0.12*		0.021	
Day only	mixed	0.05		. 0.940	
	Boarding	0.15*		0.010	
	Single	0.02		0.695	
Single	mixed	-0.02		0.685	
	Boarding	0.12*		0.21	
	Day only	-0.02		0.695	

The findings show that the age of students influenced their perception of counselling on academic needs. Post hoc tests were conducted to test the significance between the means. There is a significant statistical difference $F(2,397) = 3.259$, $P = 0.039$ on the students' academic needs by the age of students from 14 to 15 years and 19 to 20 years. From the findings the null hypothesis that the age of the students has no significant impact on their perceptions is rejected; it is concluded that age of students had significant influence; the ages 14 to 15 years as well as 19 to 20 years had more positive perception, hence they were more satisfied than students of other ages. This necessitates organizing guidance and counselling based on age specific content for them to benefit more (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the class level of the students'

class level influenced their perception ($p = 0.038$) (Table 6). From these results the null hypothesis that stated the class level has no significant influence on students' perception is rejected. It shows that the class of the students significantly influenced their perceptions. Additionally, it can be deduced that form three were more satisfied and had more positive perception than the other groups. More sensitization on the use of guidance and counselling services need to be enhanced across the class levels for them to benefit optimally.

The findings from the study indicate that the respondents' perception of counselling program on the satisfaction of academic needs was satisfactory (positive); the overall satisfaction mean was 2.50. The overall impression is that students were satisfied with the implementation of guidance and counselling regarding academics needs on majority of the items that were investigated. The findings confirm what Ribadu (2021) found that 63 % of the respondents strongly approved of the guidance and counselling role in students' academic

Table 5. Age and the perception of guidance and counselling on academic needs.

Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	.830	2	.415	3.259	.039
Within groups	50.581	397	.127		
Total	51.411	99			

Post Hoc tests
Multiple comparisons

(I)Age (years)	(J) Age (years)	Mean difference	sig.
14-15	16-18	0.09*	0.025
	19-20	0.15*	0.04
16-18	14-15	-0.09*	0.025
	19-20	0.06	0.404
19-20	14-15	-0.15*	0.04

Table 6. Class levels and perception on academic needs.

Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	sig.
Between groups	1.078	3	.359	2.827	.038
Within groups	50.33	396	.127		
Total	51.41				

Multiple comparisons

(I)class	(J)Class	Mean difference	sig
Form one	Form two	0.11*	0.041
	Form three	0.15*	0.040
	Form four	0.11	0.054
Form two	Form one	0.11*	0.041
	Form three	0.04	0.397
	Form four	-0.00	0.974
Form three	Form one	-0.15*	0.040
	Form two	-0.04	0.397
	Form four	-0.14	0.974
Form four	Form one	-0.11	0.054
	Form two	0.00	0.974
	Form three	0.04	0.401

improvement. These results are consistent with Kyauta (2017) who found in a study that counselling services enhances good study habits which ultimately improves academic performance. Atsuwe and Achugbulu (2018) and Cheruiyot and Simatwa (2016) found a positive correlation between counselling program and academic achievements of students in Benue State, Nigeria. The gender of the students and type of school were insignificant influence on their perception of counselling towards academic needs. However, it is noteworthy that the school category was found significant in its impact on

the perception of the students. The students from mixed boarding school were more satisfied than the other students. This could be due to the types of guidance and counselling contents offered in the school setting (Eremie and Jackson, 2019).

The ages of the students were found significant in influencing their perception regarding academic needs satisfaction. Specifically, 14 to 15 years and 16 to 20 years were more satisfied than students of other ages. The findings are consistent with Stokes (1998) who cited developmental issues as a fact that affects perception.

Atodo (2008) also confirmed the same while investigating on the utilization of counselling services in schools. Cakir and Avci (2021) reported that subjective well-being and target orientation as well as sense of belonging in school are significant predictors of academic achievement and resilience in high school students; all these factors can be improved with counselling services in schools.

Class levels of the students also had significant influence on their perception of academic needs. Students from form one, form two and three were more satisfied than others with the impact of guidance and counselling on academic needs satisfaction. This could be due to the heavy emphasis on academics and passing of examination in every school at the expense of other students' needs. These findings agree with Eremie and Jackson (2019) who established that certain methods of presenting counselling information and services is affected by the class levels of the respondents. It also confirms what Stone and Bradley (1994) found that the functions of guidance and counselling varied depending on the class levels of learners.

Conclusion

The study concludes that since majority of the respondents had positive perceptions of counselling programs regarding academics needs it is imperative to enhance its implementation across all secondary schools in Kenya. The study findings also conclude that the execution of counselling programs need to take into consideration the class levels, ages of learners and school categories so as to satisfy the needs of students. It is also necessary to have holistic implementation of counselling services targeting all needs of learners and not only academics.

Recommendations

School counselors need to be retrained on the usability of guidance and counselling programs in fulfilling students' expectations and needs. In this regard, students should be guided on good study skills, strategies of passing examination, positive attitudes towards each subject; stress and time management techniques, educational planning among others should contribute to the content development in school counselling.

The study findings recommend enhanced awareness among students on the importance of guidance and counselling in addressing their academic needs. School counselling should be offered to all students not necessarily those with psychological problems which will help them gain access to rigorous academic preparation and excellence.

Teacher counselor's workload should be reduced to allow them time to manage unique needs of learners

which may include the gifted, those with learning and behavior difficulties among others. The more the time given for counselling functions the more the likelihood of better academic performance and holistic development of learners. It is recommended that adequate time for counselling should be outlined in the school timetable for students to note and adhere to it.

There should be team approach in the implementation of counselling programs in schools so as to involve class teachers, principals, chaplains, parents, special needs teachers and others.

It is recommended that stakeholders consider the varied perception of students on the influence of counselling on their needs as this affects their utilization of this noble service. Neutral or uncertain perception responses could indicate the counselling program is not being felt in school and its impact is not noticeable.

The ministry of Education should develop a proper policy on guidance and counselling in secondary schools so that there is uniform administration of the programs. This is because each school is implementing differently based on the perceived benefits. A standardized implementation matrix should be set in place by the ministry to avoid ensuing confusion.

The needs of physically challenged learners should not be left with special needs education teachers alone but a systematic framework should be established where the school counselors can also attempt to address their specific needs. This may require additional competencies by teacher counselors.

Teachers and school administrators should take advantage of the positive perception of students towards guidance and counselling to escalate implementation of programs to a large scale to support academic activities in their schools.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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