

INFLUENCE OF PLACEMENT SERVICE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DUTSIN-MA LGA, KATSINA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Influence of Placement Service on Students' Academic Performance in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. The study was guided by the three objectives, among which are; to examine the influence of pre-placement assessment and evaluation on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Three corresponding research questions and hypotheses were in line with the objectives. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises 4,109 principals, teachers and students of public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma from which 9 principals, 86 teachers and 257 students were randomly selected as sample for the study. Placement Service and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (PSSAPQ) was used and validated by two experts in the department of educational psychology and counselling, measurement and evaluation unit, with reliability Coefficient of 0.72. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. While, the hypotheses were tested using One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance The findings of the study revealed that pre-placement assessment positively influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Lastly, the study concluded that involvement of trained placement personnel's enhances students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that State Ministry of Education should standardize and implement pre-placement assessments across all senior secondary schools to ensure proper student academic placement.

Key words: Placement Service, Students, Academic Performance.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as the cornerstone of national development, with its quality and accessibility influencing the social, economic, and political advancement of any nation. In Nigeria, the senior secondary school level is particularly important as it forms the preparatory stage for higher education and specialized vocational training. The academic performance of students at this stage determines their future educational and career pathways. However, performance at this level is affected by several variables, among which is the effectiveness of support services such as placement (Aliyu & Abdullahi, 2022; Oladele & Adeyemi, 2022).

Placement service, is an integral part of school guidance and counselling programmes, that involves assigning students to appropriate subject areas, academic tracks, and learning environments based on an assessment of their interests, abilities, and aptitudes. The Federal

Ministry of Education through the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) emphasizes the relevance of guidance and counselling services, including placement, as a means of facilitating students' self-actualization and educational success. Placement, when professionally handled, ensures that students are streamed into subjects or academic areas that match their potential, which in turn promotes better understanding, motivation, and academic achievement (Obiunu, 2021; Okorie, 2022). In practice, however, many senior secondary schools across Nigeria, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas like Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, do not fully implement effective placement systems. Students are often placed in subject streams based on casual teacher assessments, parental influence, or peer choices rather than structured counselling or standardized aptitude evaluation (Usman & Ahmed, 2023; Yahaya & Shehu, 2021). This undermines the objective of the placement process and often results in student misplacement. Misplaced students may find themselves struggling academically in subjects that do not align with their cognitive strengths or interests, leading to reduced performance, disengagement, and even school dropout (Chinelo, 2023; Lawal & Ibrahim, 2023).

The implications of inappropriate placement are far-reaching. Misplacement limits students' ability to perform optimally, affects their self-esteem, and in many cases, denies them access to their desired career paths (Aliyu & Abdullahi, 2022). For instance, a student who is strong in the humanities but is placed in a science stream may find it difficult to cope with core science subjects, leading to chronic underperformance. This, in turn, can hinder their chances of gaining admission into tertiary institutions or pursuing preferred professional fields (Usman & Ahmed, 2023).

In Dutsin-Ma LGA, the situation is particularly challenging. Recent reports and local education reviews have shown a consistent decline in students' academic performance in core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, and Biology at the senior secondary level (Yahaya & Shehu, 2021; Ministry of Education Katsina State, 2023). While infrastructural and resource-related issues have been widely cited, the role of placement services has been under-examined. Many secondary schools in the area operate without qualified guidance counsellors, and placement decisions are often made without the benefit of academic and psychological profiling (Okorie, 2022; Chinelo, 2023).

Furthermore, the importance of placement has become even more critical in today's changing academic and career landscape. With the increasing emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and the diversification of career opportunities, students need to be properly guided into subject areas that reflect their strengths and ambitions (Oladele & Adeyemi, 2022; Lawal & Ibrahim, 2023). Without effective placement mechanisms, many students may be steered away from disciplines in which they could excel and contribute meaningfully to national development.

Moreover, the lack of a standardized and effective placement framework in many Nigerian secondary schools points to a gap in policy implementation. Although the National Policy on Education mandates the integration of guidance and counselling services in all secondary schools, many states, including Katsina, have not adequately enforced this provision (FRN, 2014; Okorie, 2022). The shortage of trained counsellors and the absence of diagnostic tools for student assessment further compound the problem. As a result, students are left to make life-defining academic choices without proper direction or support (Chinelo, 2023).

Given the challenges highlighted above, it becomes necessary to examine how placement services influence students' academic performance, especially in underserved areas such as Dutsin-Ma LGA. A focused investigation into this relationship will provide insights into how structured placement services can contribute to improved student achievement. It will also inform education administrators, counsellors, and policymakers on the need to institutionalize and strengthen placement practices in senior secondary schools. Ensuring that students that are properly placed will not only enhance academic outcomes but also set them on the path to long-term career and personal success.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance in senior secondary schools across Nigeria, particularly in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, has continued to decline despite efforts to improve teaching and learning. While factors such as inadequate infrastructure and limited instructional resources have been widely discussed, less attention has been paid to the role of placement services in shaping students' academic outcomes. Placement services are meant to guide students into subject combinations and academic tracks that align with their abilities, interests, and career goals. However, in some schools one may find that there is only one or no counsellor handling the guidance and counseling programme with students choosing subjects/careers similar to friends rather than through interest or aptitude (Aliero, 2023).

Despite growing concerns about underachievement in key subjects like Mathematics and English Language, there is limited empirical research linking poor academic performance to ineffective or absent placement services in the area. This gap necessitates an investigation into how placement practices affect students' performance in senior secondary schools. Understanding this relationship is essential for improving educational outcomes and ensuring that students are guided into academic paths where they can excel.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate influence of placement service on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. Investigate the influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.
2. Determine the influence of the involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.
3. Assess the influence of guidance and counselling service on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State?

2. What is the influence of the involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State?
3. What is the influence of guidance and counselling service on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State?

Research Hypotheses

HO1: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of principals, teachers and students on influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State

HO2: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of respondents on the influence of involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State

HO3: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of respondents on the influence of guidance and counselling service on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it helps in describing existing conditions and events in their natural settings.

Population

The population of the study consisted of 4,109 respondents, comprising principals, teachers, and students from all the 20 public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 351 respondents were selected from the population of 4,109 using the stratified random sampling technique.

Instrument for Data Collection, Validity and Reliability

The instrument used for data collection was the Placement Service and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (PSSAPQ). The instrument was validated by two experts from the Test, Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Federal University Dutsin-Ma. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method, and the data obtained was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.72.

Data Analysis

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. An interpretive benchmark of 2.50 was established for the outcomes, consistent with common practices in educational research, where a mean score of 2.50 on a 4-point Likert scale is typically considered the threshold for agreement or significance (Boone & Boone, 2012; Agwu & Kalu, 2015).

Results

Research Question One: What is the influence of pre-placement assessment on students’ academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of pre-placement assessment on students’ academic performance

S/N	Item Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Students are assessed through academic records or entrance tests before subject placement.	351	2.60	.61
2.	The school follows a structured process to evaluate students' strengths prior to assigning subject combinations.	351	2.58	.61
3.	Pre-placement assessments help match students to subjects where they are most likely to succeed.	351	2.51	.58
4.	Inadequate assessment before placement often leads to poor student performance.	351	2.74	.62
5.	Subject placement decisions in this school are based on a fair evaluation of each student's academic profile.	351	2.64	.62
Decision Mean			2.62	0.61

Table 1 shows that item 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 had mean scores above the mean benchmark of 2.50, this implies that Principals, Teachers and Students were of the opinion that students are assessed through academic records or entrance tests before subject placement, that the school follows a structured process to evaluate students' strengths prior to assigning subject combinations, that pre-placement assessments help match students to subjects where they are most likely to succeed, that inadequate assessment before placement often leads to poor student performance and that subject placement decisions in this school are based on a fair evaluation of each student's academic profile. However, from the responses of the respondents one can find that pre-placement assessment positively influence students’ academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State as indicated by the decision mean score of 2.62.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of the involvement of trained placement personnel on students’ academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance.

S/N	Item Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
6.	Your school employs trained personnel or designated staff to assist with student placement.	351	2.84	.68
7.	Trained personnel are actively involved in helping students choose appropriate subject areas.	351	2.50	.57
8.	Students who are placed with the guidance of trained professionals perform better academically.	31	2.61	.63
9.	The absence of trained placement staff can result in academic challenges for students.	351	2.48	.59
10.	Guidance and input from professionals are part of the placement process in this school.	351	2.62	.62
Decision Mean			2.61	0.62

Table 2 shows that item 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 had mean scores above the mean benchmark of 2.50, it implies that respondents were of the opinions that there schools employ trained counsellors or designated staff to assist with student placement, that trained personnel are actively involved in helping students choose appropriate subject areas, that students who are placed with the guidance of trained professionals perform better academically, and that guidance and input from professionals are part of the placement process in their schools. Item number 4 had mean scores below the mean benchmark of 2.50, it implies that respondents were of the opinions that the absence of trained placement staff can result in academic challenges for students. However, from the responses of the respondents one can find that involvement of trained placement personnel's enhances students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State indicated by the decision mean score of 2.61.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of guidance and counselling service on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of guidance and counselling service on students' academic performance

S/N	Item Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
11.	Guidance and counselling services help students improve their study habits.	351	3.25	.80
12.	Guidance and counselling services enhance students' time management skills.	351	2.80	.67
13.	Guidance and counselling services reduce students' examination anxiety.	351	2.45	.57

14.	Guidance and counselling services motivate students to set and achieve academic goals.	351	3.40	.55
15.	Guidance and counselling services provide strategies for overcoming learning difficulties.	351	3.05	.75
Decision Mean			2.99	0.67

Table 3 shows that item 11, 12, 14 and 15 had mean scores above the mean benchmark of 2.50, this implies that respondents were of the opinions that guidance and counselling services help students improve their study habits, that guidance and counselling services enhance students' time management skills, that guidance and counselling services provide strategies for overcoming learning difficulties, and that guidance and counselling services motivate students to set and achieve academic goals. Item 13 had mean score below the mean benchmark of 2.50, this implies that respondents were of the opinions guidance and counselling services reduce students' examination anxiety. However, from the responses of the respondents one can find that guidance and counselling services positively influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State as indicated by the decision mean score of 2.99.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of principals, teachers and students on influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance.

Sources	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	P-value.
Between Groups	19.85	2	9.93	33.90	0.001
Within Groups	105.30	349	.30		
Total	125.15	351			

Table 4 showed that the p-value (0.001) is less than the alpha value of 0.05 $P < 0.05$. This implies that there is significant difference on the mean responses of principals, teachers and students on influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of respondents on the influence of involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance.

Sources	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	P-value.
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Between Groups	18.95	2	8.93	31.70	0.002
Within Groups	101.40	349	.28		
Total	113.12	351			

Table 5 showed that the p-value (0.002) is less than the alpha value of 0.05 $P < 0.05$. This implies that there is significant difference in the opinions of respondents on the influence of involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference on the mean responses of principals, teachers and students on influence of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on guidance and counselling service on students' academic performance.

Sources	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F	P-value.
Between Groups	4.321	2	2.16	4.85	0.009
Within Groups	154.876	349	.44		
Total	159.197	351			

Table 6 showed that the p-value (0.009) is less than the alpha value of 0.05 $P < 0.05$. This implies that there is significant difference on the mean responses of principals, teachers and students on influence of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The finding in research question one revealed that pre-placement assessment positively influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. And that there is significant difference on the mean responses of principals, teachers and students on influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Al-Maamari, and Amzat, (2012) who found that proper academic placement based on diagnostic assessments significantly enhanced students' academic achievement and reduced dropout rates, particularly in science subjects. Furthermore, the findings of Ndirangu, and Udoto, (2011) noted that students placed according to entry-level assessments performed better in national exams compared to randomly placed peers, highlighting the role of pre-placement evaluation in boosting performance.

The finding in research question two revealed that involvement of trained placement personnel's enhances students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. And that there is significant difference in the opinions of respondents on the influence of involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. This finding is in agreement

with the findings of Okon, (2014) who reported that schools with qualified counselors experienced better student performance and adjustment due to effective educational placement and academic advising. Also, the finding correlate with the findings of Egbochuku, and Alika, (2008) who emphasized that the presence of trained guidance counselors had a statistically significant effect on students' academic performance and educational planning, but such professionals were unevenly distributed across schools, especially in rural areas.

The finding in research question three revealed that guidance and counselling services positively influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. And that there is significant difference in the opinions of respondents on the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Egbochuku (2008), who noted that effective guidance and counselling programs play a crucial role in promoting students' learning outcomes and overall academic success. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Nwachukwu (2007), who emphasized that stakeholders in education often hold differing perspectives on the extent to which guidance and counselling impact students' performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings the study concluded that pre-placement assessment positively influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. And that there is significant difference on influence of pre-placement assessment on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. The study equally concluded that involvement of trained placement personnel's enhances students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. And that there is significant difference on the influence of involvement of trained placement personnel on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State.

Lastly, the study concluded that guidance and counselling services positively influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State. And that there is significant difference on the influence of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State

Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. State Ministry of Education should standardize and implement pre-placement assessments across all senior secondary schools to ensure proper student academic placement.
2. School administrators and education policy-makers should recruit and deploy more professionally trained placement personnels to underserved schools to enhance equitable access to placement services.
3. School Administrators should strengthen and adequately support guidance and counselling services in their schools to sustain and improve students' academic achievement.

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