

E-UTME and Counseling on Subject Combination and Course Selection among Final Year Secondary School Students in Dutse Metropolis Jigawa State: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward

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Abstract

The study examined the e-UTME and counseling on subject combination and course selection Among final year secondary school students in Dutse Metropolis Jigawa State. Descriptive survey design was used, with two specific objectives. Twenty-Five (25) students were randomly selected from each of the four (4) purposively sampled secondary schools within Dutse Metropolis. A total of 100 final year students were selected as the sample size for the study, using a well-structured and validated questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The data obtained from the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented through the use of frequency tables and simple percentages. The findings of this study showed that despite the assumption of the presence and access of guidance and counseling in our secondary schools, the majority (76%) and (83%) of the respondents indicated that there is neither availability of guidance and counseling services nor access to them in their schools. The study also revealed that none of the respondents have obtained guidance and counseling services on utme subject combination and course selection and with (63% Science) and (68% Art), the result indicated that there is a high percentage of lack of knowledge of respondents about utme subject combination and course selection. Based on this finding, the study recommended that guidance and counseling services should be provided in all secondary schools, and the officers' skills and knowledge should be updated through training in order to guide and counsel especially the final year students to understand the relationship of subjects to a particular career vis-a-viz utme subject combination and course selection.

Keywords: e-UTME, Course Selection, Counseling, Secondary School, Student

INTRODUCTION

Unified Tertiary Matriculations Examination (UTME) is an annual qualifying entrance examination conducted by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB). For prospective candidates to gain admission into tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education and Agriculture, and similar other institutions, they must apply, get registered, write the UTME exam and score the minimum points required by JAMB and the institutions of choice of the candidates. Before 2014 the exam was a paper-and-pencil-based test; but since May 17, 2014, however, all administrations of the exam have been computer-based. The migration of JAMB from the Paper Pencil Test (PPT) to the Computer Based Test (CBT) was aimed at addressing the challenges of the PPT such as abnormalities experienced before the introduction of the CBT.

The electronic Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (e-UTME) is the Computer Based Test (CBT) mode of examination which emerged as one of the recent innovative approaches to assessments by examination bodies against the Pencil and Paper Testing (PPT) mode. An e-UTME computer-based test (CBT) is the taking of a test on the computer instead of using Paper and Pencil. The e-UTME computer-based test (CBT) test can also be defined as tests or assessments that are administered by computer in either stand-alone or networked configurations or by other technology devices linked to the internet or the World Wide Web (Olsen 2000).

The (e-UTME), Electronic Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination or Computer Based Test is a computer-based standardized examination for prospective undergraduates in Nigeria, conducted by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board. It is designed for problem-solving, critical thinking, knowledge of scientific concepts, and the significant principles of each subject taken.

Furthermore, Daramola (2018) posited that Computer Based Test is not just an alternative method for delivering examinations or opportunities for innovation in the university system; it represents an important qualitative shift away from traditional methods of examination such as paper-based tests to a computer-based test.

However, before sitting for JAMB's e-UTME examination, there are several preliminary steps that prospective undergraduates are expected to take. The candidates - who are mostly fresh graduates of post-secondary education - must apply and register online. During registration, candidates are expected to provide and/or verify their biodata, select institution of choice, select course of study, provide O'Level result information, and lastly, upload all necessary documents. These steps seem simple, but one of the greatest challenges final year secondary school students face is the course selection. Admission into the University to study any course to a large extent depends on the right course you choose and the combination of subjects, which also determine one's career in life. According to Salami & Salami (2013),

secondary school students are always concerned about their future as regards job availability, occupational mobility and they tend to make good plans today to achieve success for the anticipated future.

Furthermore, Eremie & Ibifari (2018) argued that counseling makes it possible for an individual to see and explore his or her unlimited endowed options. The authors further explained that it is an undeniable fact that the major service areas of guidance and counseling are, educational guidance and counseling which assists students in their choices of courses in addition to other important areas. Orewere (2012), also posited that for guidance and counseling to be effective, there must be a series of programmed activities to help students develop a positive attitude towards it. This enables students with information and guidance with regard to personal, academic, and career alternatives. Hence, guidance and counseling play a vital role in the career choice of final year secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem

There exist numerous recurring problems encountered by final year secondary school students in their process of course combination and selection. Some students are not properly informed due to a lack of or inadequate guidance and counseling services. Where such services are available, there is a general lack of professionalism as well as inadequate information to guide students on various course combinations and selection options, especially at the time when the e-UTME brochure is only

available and distributed during registration and the e-copy is almost impossible for students to access for reasons of Internet availability and connectivity. As a result, students do deny themselves secure admission even before they sit for the exams due to wrong course selection and/or subject combination.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research paper is to examine the issues and challenges surrounding non-counseling and its effects on e-UTME subject combination and courses selection among Secondary School Students. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine the issues surrounding the non-counseling of final year secondary school students on e-UTME courses selection.
2. To determine the extent to which it affects students' choice of e-utme subjects and courses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Guidance and Counseling

According to Garba (1994), guidance and counseling is a program of service to individuals as well as a group of people with peculiar but similar needs. The author posited that the problem consists of services that are designed to help individuals as well as groups to adjust to their environment and or new conditions. Shertzer and Stone (1976) defined guidance as a process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world. They also defined counseling as a learning process in themselves, their interpersonal relationships, and

behaviors that promote their personal development. Counseling is grouped into two major types, namely: individual counseling and group counseling. Kolo (2012) argued that individual counseling refers to one-on-one counseling, and occurs between the professionally trained counselor and his client. The goal of individual counseling is to help the client to understand himself, clarify and direct his thought in order to make a worthwhile decision. Group counseling on the other hand is a counseling session that takes place between a professionally trained counselor and a group of people. The number of this group should be more than seven or at least ten in order to have a cohesive group and an effective well-controlled counseling session.

Guidance and Counseling in Schools

The Nigerian secondary school educational system expects that students are to be properly guided on their educational activities, vocational choices, emotional and socio-personal problems (S.Y. Sheriff, et al. 2020). The students are also helped through guidance and counseling to acquire better decision-making skills, identify their unique needs, the needs of other people, and society in general.

Garba (1912), classified guidance and counseling in schools into three different spheres which include educational, vocational, and personal-social counseling. The author maintained that educational counseling is the counseling that is being rendered to learners in order to enhance their achievement in education. It is academic counseling that aims at improving the

performance and achievement of learning in a program of study. Vocational counseling refers to the practice of providing advice and direction on career-related decisions. According to Samson (2004), vocational counselors, who are sometimes called school or career counselors are available to help people decide on and take the next steps in their careers. They do this by helping clients to assess and understand their strengths and capabilities and encourage their clients on appropriate career goals. Personal social counseling is the counseling relating to the psycho-social needs of the learners in school. Similarly, learners come to school with varying social problems and a counselor needs to intervene in the learners' decisions so as to enable them to forget about worries and learn successfully (Herbert, 2005).

e-UTME, subject combination, and Course selection

e-utme examination has taken place at least eight times since inception. Accordingly, the migration of JAMB from the Paper Pencil Test (PPT) to the Computer Based Test (CBT) has brought about new policies, rules, and regulations that affect different components of the examination such as registration, examination as well as the issuance of admission. One important component that poses a serious challenge to most final-year secondary school students is e-utme registration. In e-utme registration, there are two important decisions every candidate is expected to make. Candidates must decide and select the course to study at the University as well as make the acceptable

combination of subjects from the pool of subjects that will qualify that candidate for the course selected. As stated above, there is a strong relationship between course selection and subject combination. The choice of one affects the other significantly. Because JAMB has placed so much emphasis and importance on the subject combination, a candidate may fail to secure admission into his/her course of choice on the bases of the wrong subject combination.

e-UTME Registration Issues

JAMB online registration or e-utme registration means the process of registration using a web application via the internet. An online registration system eliminates the need of filling out paper forms manually and sending them to a registration office. When using online registration systems, the participants can simply register at their convenience and submit their information immediately. E-utme registration is done through CBT Centres spread across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. Each year, JAMB sends the registration App to every accredited center together with a unique access code that will enable the CBT Centres to use the application.

JAMB/University Admission and Guidelines

Every year, JAMB releases a guiding document to all critical stakeholders on the admission exercise. It highlights the salient points on the processes of admitting candidates into Nigerian Tertiary Institutions (JAMB 2021 Admission Guidelines). According to the Board, it is the proprietor of

each institution in Nigeria that determines the criteria for admission into their respective institutions subject to the law, policies of the government, and international treaties to which Nigeria subscribes.

Additionally, the Senate or the Academic Board of each institution set the minimum standard acceptable to it and no institution is expected or persuaded to recommend for approval of JAMB any candidate below the standard set by the institution.

According to the 2021 Admission guidelines document, admission exercise is conducted on the Central Admission Processing System (CAPS) of JAMB. Institutions are to recommend candidates for admission to JAMB after having presented the following information through CAPS: the approved general quota for each institution and the distribution to the various programs (Except that the quota for regulated programs must be within the limits approved by the appropriate professional agency); ii) minimum UTME score for each program; iii) minimum DE qualification grades for Direct Entry Candidates; iv) components of Cut-off marks and the allotted score for each component; v) the cut-off date for admissions after which no result upload nor change of Institution would be allowed; vi) supplementary admission can be allowed but fresh candidates cannot have right to be on merit list but through other criteria to fill existing vacancies; vii) other admissions criteria (if any).

Reasons why candidates may be denied admission

There are many reasons why candidates may not be offered admission both by school and JAMB. Admission into Nigerian Universities, polytechnics, colleges of education is quite competitive in nature, many are called but only a few are chosen. Over the years, many candidates who pass JAMB and even exceed the school of the choice cutoff mark for their desired course end up not gaining admission and often ask why they were not offered admission.

As critical as this question appears to be, the answer lies in the little things we overlook and take for granted. For some, it is a result of ignorance or misinformation. Others are wrong UTME subject combination, wrong O'level subject combination, using more than two sittings, low cut-off mark, not beating the departmental cut-off mark for your course. Others are age (candidates that are not up to 16 years), examination malpractice, lack of information/misinformation, low JAMB score, O'level result not uploaded, catchment area consideration, and unavailability of admission quota.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

A survey research design was used for the study.

Population

Final year secondary school students from four (4) selected secondary schools within Jigawa State constituted the population of the research study, with a sample of 100 students.

Sampling Technique

Twenty-Five (25) students were randomly selected from each of the four (4) purposively sampled secondary schools within Jigawa State.

Data Collection Tool(s)

Data for the study were collected through the administration of a well-designed questionnaire titled "E-UTME and Counseling on Subject Combination and Course Selection Among Final Year Secondary School Students in Dutse Metropolis Jigawa State: Issues, Challenges, and the Way Forward". The questionnaire has two sections. Section A contains the demographic data of respondents while section B contains items used to elicit information on e-utme and counseling on the subject combination and course selection. The questionnaire was designed to directly elicit responses that will enable the study to achieve its objectives. The instrument was administered by the researchers to 100 students and retrieved them on the spot, therefore a 100% return was achieved.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULT & DISCUSSION

Distribution of respondents by School, Gender, Art, and Science;

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents on the basis of school, gender, arts, and science students. This indicates that out of the total sample, 53% of the respondents are male while 47% are female. The table also shows

that in each of the purposively sampled secondary schools 25% of sampled respondents were drawn. With regards to the classes of the respondents, most of the students who

participated in this research are in Art class with 65% representation while the remaining 35% constitutes those students from science class.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by School, Gender, Art and Science

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	72	53%
	Female	28	47%
	Total	100	100%
Schools	Government Secondary School, Dutse	25	25%
	Government Arabic School, Dutse	25	25%
	Government Commercial Secondary School, Dutse	25	25%
	Senior Secondary School, Madobi	25	25%
	Total	100	100%
Science		35	35%
Arts		65	65%
	Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Availability of G/C in the sampled schools;

Table 2 reveals that the majority (76%) of respondents indicated that there is no existence of guidance and counseling services in schools while

21% of the respondents stated that there is an existence of guidance and counseling services and 3% declined to comment on G/C services availability.

Table 2: Availability of G/C in the sampled schools

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Availability of G/C	21	21%
Unavailability of G/C	76	76%
Not specified	3	3%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Table 3: Access to G/C to Students

Variables	Frequency	percentage
Access to G/C	13	13%
Non Access to G/C	83	83%
Not specified	4	4%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Access to G/C to Students;

Table 3 reveals that almost all the respondents (83%) in the sample population have no access to guidance and counseling services in the schools. This is followed by 13% of the respondents who have accessed guidance and counseling services. 4%

declined to make any comments on the access to guidance and counseling services in their schools. This finding indicates that despite the importance of guidance and counseling services in schools, only a few students have ever accessed the services.

Table 4: Types of G/C Services obtain in the schools

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Career Choice	6	6%
Drug Abuse	3	3%
e-utme subject & course selection	0	0%
Marriage	0	0%
Family issues	1	1%
Cultism	3	3%
Not specified	87	87%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Types of G/C Services obtain in the schools;

Of the types of guidance and counseling services respondents obtain in their schools, table 4 reveals that 87% which is the highest declined to indicate the type of G/C services they acquire in their schools. 6% of these respondents stated that they obtained G/C services on career choice, 3% on

drug abuse, another 3% on cultism, and 1% obtained services on family issues. Utme subject combination and course selection and marriage got 0% indicating that no respondent obtained any guidance and counseling service pertaining to utme subject combination and course selection and also marriage.

Table 5a: Student knowledge on combination and selection of Science courses

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
SCIENCE Subject Combination & Course Selection	Right Combination & Selection	13	37%
	Wrong Combination & Selection	22	63%
	Total	35	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Student knowledge of combination and selection of Science courses

Table 5a reveals that, of the total respondents, 63% made either wrong utme subject combination and/or wrong course selection, while 37%

obtained the right utme subject combination and/or right course selection. This indicates that the majority have no knowledge about utme subject combination and/or course selection.

Table 5b: Student knowledge of combination and selection of Arts courses

Variables			Frequency	Percentage
ARTS Subject Combination & Course Selection	Right Combination & Selection		21	32%
	Wrong Combination & Selection		44	68%
		Total	65	100%

Source: Field Survey 2022

Student knowledge of combination and selection of Arts courses

From table 5b, the percentage of respondents who made the right subsection combination and/or is 32% while the percentage of respondents that made the wrong combination is 68%, indicating that there is a high percentage of lack of knowledge about utme subject combination and course selection. This also explains why according to Maree (2009) that there are so many casualties who fail to secure admission at all in the Universities or fail to get the courses of their choice on the basis of subject combination and course selection each year utme examination is written.

Discussion

This study has explored the need for effective and updated guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Jigawa state, especially for the final year students, to enable them to obtain effective guidance on utme subject combination and course selection. The importance of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. For effective student career choice, schools, as noted by Weishew & Perk (2012) play an important role. The study revealed the absence of

guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Jigawa state, with attendant negative effects on career choice of students as posited by Durosaro and Nuhu (2012) that most undergraduates have problems in the course of their studies due to the absence of guidance in their choice of subject combination. Lack of adequate access to guidance and counseling services is another revelation made by this study which aligns with the work of Maree (2013) who noted that many learners passed through secondary school and find it difficult to be admitted into universities or other tertiary institutions due to not receiving counseling and guidance on good subject combination while in senior secondary school. The result of this study also reveals that quite a high percentage (63% Science and 67% Art) of respondents lack the knowledge of combining utme subjects according to the course selected, just as 0% was the percentage obtained by respondents regarding the presence of subject combination and course selection as a type of service of guidance and counseling obtained in secondary schools in Jigawa State. This goes to prove that there is a need for training and retraining of guidance and counseling officers to obtain and

update their knowledge on new and latest developments in the field so that effective counseling can be provided to these final year students, especially on the issue of subject combination and course selection for the purpose of utme examination.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In this study, it has been established that guidance and counseling provide appropriate assistance to students to better understand themselves and their personalities and also acquire better decision-making skills in making appropriate career choices which is crucial to their future accomplishments. The study concludes that government, school management as well as parents should work in synergy to ensure that improved, effective, and comprehensive guidance and counseling services are provided in all secondary schools. This will go a long way to strengthening and improving students' career choices. The result of the study guided the making of these recommendations.

1. Government should enforce the establishment of counseling centers in both public and private secondary schools and the implementation of orientation, enlightenment, and awareness programs.
2. Counselors should be given hands-on training and retraining, attend professional workshops/conferences on guidance and counseling services to learn new ideas for engaging with students in secondary schools in order to improve their career choice.

3. Certain important aspects of our educational policy such as utme subject combination and course selection should be incorporated into guidance and counseling services to enlighten especially the final year secondary school students, who would be seeking placement into universities and other tertiary institutions through utme examination on the relationship of subjects to a particular career.
4. Government should support guidance and counseling practically by providing and making funds available for all the services in all secondary schools.
5. Finally, in order to encourage students towards seeking guidance and counseling services in secondary schools, a guidance and counseling student club should be established in all secondary schools to include both students and staff from all study areas.

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