



Relationship between Entry Qualification and Students' Academic Achievement in Gombe State Tertiary Institutions. Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study investigated the relationship between entry qualification and students' academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions. Two objectives and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. This study employ multiple correlation research design, the area of the study was Gombe state. The total population is 428 students' folders. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study. The population sample for this study was made up to 428 students' folders from the institutions under study from 2013/2014 – 2015/2016 academic sessions using balloting technique, a pro forma was administered to each institution selected for data collection. However the researcher designs two (2) pro forma for data collection. It obtain information on students number, O-Level result, Mode of entry, and CGPA scores, it also contained the name of school, faculty, and academic session in particular. In order to determine the validity of the instruments, opinion of professionals in the Department of Science Education in Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola, is ascertained. After the construction of the instrument, three (3) experts validated instrument for both content and face validity. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 and 0.92 was obtained which shows a high reliability. The researcher collect an introductory letter to allow the researcher have access to the data needed with the help of research assistants (RA's). In other to answer the null hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used. On the basis of finding of the study it was concluded that students' entry qualification, students' mode of entry have significant relationship with students' academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions. Recommendation was made that students from certificate entry qualification need monitoring and mentoring to ensure better academic performance.*

Keywords: *Entry Qualification and Students' Academic Achievement.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a means where by man is brought up in the society in which happens to belong and develop his own particular capabilities and attitudes, and be left free to live his life as he pleases. Education has been conceived as the best development of person's mind and personality which is convened with the general acquisitions of values, knowledge, skill and attitudes (Osinubi, 2007). Education as the aggregate of all processes in life continues to witness unprecedented expectations among adults in developing abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behavior which are of positive value in the society in which they live (Michaelowa, 2000). The general acceptance of Education as an instrument is capable of solving problems and

a sudden awareness of the need for sound education have brought about a major breakthrough in receiving education not just for the sake of reading and writing but also for development (Okuwa, 2004).

Zezeke and Mudavanhu, (2000) reported that in the tertiary institutions, the standardized model is used. This model depends on the use of scholastic aptitude test. These tests if both used exclusively anywhere; they are regarded as a way of increasing the validity of prediction of success in higher institutions. Generally however, such admission tests are thought to be useful provided they are tried under realistic condition of operation and under scientific control. Responsibility for the production and application of standardized tests generally rests with special bodies such as American College Testing Programme (ACT) in the United States of America, institute of test development in Germany, and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination Board (UTME) in Nigeria.

According to National Policy on Education, (2016) Higher education policies have recently been initiated in Nigeria. They respond to long-festering problems of access, quality, financing, governance and management within the nation's federal university system, and seek to bring this system more in line with global good practices. The need for these changes is generally not appreciated among systems stakeholders. They have been relatively cut off from the worldwide higher education transformations that took place in the 1990s as the result of international sanctions and cancellation of international cooperation programs imposed in response to human rights abuses within the country during the middle of the past decade. As a result, the success of these reforms is likely to depend upon the extent to which rigidities of the present system (i.e., within the National Universities Commission, the various university staff unions, and within the universities themselves) can be replaced by more flexible and responsive practices. At this point, the principal task is not to accelerate the pace of change but to institutionalize the current reforms and operationalize them effectively. In order for this to occur, greater flexibility and responsiveness are needed, particularly in the following four areas, in order to create an enabling environment for the emergence of progressive self-steering, self-regulating, and self-reliant universities in Nigeria.

According to the Nigerian University Commissions, (2007) General guidelines for admission into the Nation's tertiary institutions are contained in a brochure which provides detailed information on courses and entry requirements which include Five 'O' level credit passes in relevant subjects including English and Mathematics particularly for science and social sciences while Mathematics may be required at an ordinary pass level for Arts students. Four credit 'O' level passes in relevant subjects for Mono technics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The candidates must equally score the minimum cut-off marks for the desired course of study. The cut-off marks for selection vary from one institution to another depending on the competitive nature of the desired course of study.

According to the West African Examinations Council WAEC, (2016) reported that in 2016/2017 WAEC May/June results a total of 1,552,758 candidates registered for the examination. Out of which 1,544,234 candidates, consisting of 825,650 male representing 53.5% & 718,585 female representing 46.5% candidates sat the exam. 1,393,907 candidates, representing 90.26% have their results fully released. While 158,718 candidates, representing 9.74% have a few of their subjects still being processed due to some errors mainly traceable to the candidates and schools in the course of registration or writing the examination. The percentage of candidates that got 5 credits & above including English Lang & Mathematics in the WASSCE for School Candidates in 2015 was 38.68%. The results of 137,295 candidates, this shows 38.68% candidates set for WEAC in 2015 meet the entry requirement into tertiary institutions.

The Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of NECO, Prof. Charles Uwakwe, while announcing the results at the Councils National Headquarters in Minna, the Niger State capital, noted that there is a tremendous improvement compared to previous years. He said that 905,011 (84.54 per cent) of candidates got 5 credits and above in English Language while 812,846 (80.16 percent) got 5 credits and above in Mathematics. He said the comparative analysis of candidates performance in the examination for 2015 and 2016 shows that there is one percent (1%) improvement in the general performance of candidates in 2016 (88.51%) as compared with 2015 (87.51%).

During the colonial era, admission into the universities was highly restricted by the colonial masters. The implementation of Lord Eric Ashby Commission's report in (1962) marked the beginning of the breaking away from the restriction and the march towards general access to university education in Nigeria. During the 1960s and early 1970s, enrolment into the regional universities was decentralised. Each student applied to as many universities to see which one will offer him admission. To qualify for entry into the University of London (Ibadan College), a candidate had to pass the London matriculation examination or the General Certificate Examination, ordinary level with at least credits in five subjects including English, Mathematics or a Science subject. In addition, they were required to pass the G.C.E. Advanced level before they were allowed to proceed to the final B.A. or B.Sc. degree programme. Based on the practice in England, the sixth form (H.S.C.) was introduced in Nigeria and candidates had to pass three subjects at the Advanced level before admission. In 1956/57, the University of Ibadan was promoted to introduce a one-year preliminary science which candidates must pass to be allowed into a three-year degree programme. Alongside this, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka started a straight 4 – year programme in addition to the direct entry mode. Though this was subjected to criticism even by the National University Commission's Report in 1963 on the basis that it was difficult to compare a degree earned in four years with that earned in three years, nevertheless, other existing universities adopted the 4-year programme for its efficacy as seen in the quality of the alumni of the system.

Subsequently, the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced in the country and every university was mandated to mount a 4-year degree programme. With the increase in the school age population and the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) there arose a great increase in the number of candidates for enrollment into the universities. Between 1972 and 1977, the existing regional universities were centralised. Seven more universities evenly distributed across the country were established; National Universities Commission (NUC) and Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) were established with the goal of promoting national unity, peace, progress and development especially post-war pursuits.

Analysis of enrollment pattern shows an upsurge in the number of those seeking admission into the university as well as the mode of admission (Okuwa, 2004). The authors also observed that there has also been a controversy over the mode of admission of students with people claiming superiority of one over the others. Despite the increase in the number of universities established, the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination and the JAMB have not been able to adequately prepare large proportion of students for the qualifying examinations. Hence some universities have introduced the concept of pre-degree admission whereby candidates are given opportunity to remedy deficiencies in the relevant discipline. Now, there are basically three major modes of admission into the Nigerian universities. These are the University Matriculation Examination (UME) which is an organised examination conducted by the JAMB in order to centralise the admission system. This is a qualifying examination which result is used alongside the candidate's results at the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE). The UME qualifying score (cut-off point) varies from university to university, faculty to faculty and year to year and also on the federally imposed criteria of merit, catchment area and educationally less developed state. Successful candidates are given the opportunity to pursue a 4 – year or 5 – year degree programme in a conventional university or University of Technology respectively.

The Direct Entry (DE) mode of admission is designed for students who have studied in some tertiary institutions and have obtained any of the following qualifications namely Ordinary National Diploma (OND), Higher National Diploma (HND) or National Certificate of Education (NCE). On meeting the minimum criteria, these groups of candidates are admitted for a 2 or 3 – year programme. They are not expected to start from the 100 level. Their admission is also regulated by JAMB. Remedial Programme (PD) is designed for candidates who are deficient in their SSCE but made some three to four credits. They are given a second chance to make the required credits for entry into the citadel of learning. Successful candidates are admitted by the universities running the programme to remedy their deficiency. Candidates who pass the required courses at the end of the internal examination given by the universities are absorbed to proceed on four – year

degree courses without recourse to JAMB. The above are some of the efforts made to enable those who can benefit from higher education to be given access to it as the National Policy on Education (2016) advocated. Grayson, (2001) viewed academic performance as an expression of one's achievement from school based instructions. A student's academic performance is usually measured in examinations or continuous assessment tests and could be expressed in various ways depending on what the scores will be used for. The various ways of reporting academic performance include percentages, quartiles, raw scores, transformed scores, or even as categorical variables such as Excellent, Very Good, First Class, Distinction, A1, B2, C4, F9, etc. The academic performance of a student is a function of many variables which could be classified into student, home, and school, and teacher, cultural and legal factors.

Obioma and Salau, (2007) have attempted to establish a relationship between entry point and performance of the tertiary levels. They found that the entry qualifications of students measured by their credit passes from WAEC, NECO and JAMB examinations had low correlation with their first and final year's performance in the Universities. Agbo (2003), in one of his studies in science noted and identified this trend in higher institutions and tried to identify the factors responsible for it. Newman-Ford et al, (2009) noted that mature students tend to be admitted into their programs with distinctively lower educational attainment than the younger students. They therefore lack basic skills required for effective study and are also impaired by age-related deficits. On the other hand, it might be argued that distance study students are more mature and more motivated, focused and goal oriented than the youthful on-campus students.

Statement of the Problem

The use of examination selection for placement into institutions of higher learning as a method of ensuring a fair distribution of the available spaces for tertiary education and a means of reducing the imbalance in the educational development of the various parts of the country has to some extent ensured some measure for equitable representation in Nigeria. Presently, Nigeria has bilateral agreements with some African countries in education. Nigeria admits and trains the citizens of these countries in its tertiary institutions on major challenge facing the use of selection examination for placement into tertiary institutions in Nigeria and also the scourge of examination malpractice. It has to a large extent militated against the objectives for which the selection examinations were set to achieve and ensuring that suitable and qualified candidates are offered admission into institutions of higher learning. The spate of misconduct during examination in Nigeria occasioned calls by some universities about two years ago for a Post Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) Screening which has generated a lot of debates.

Apart from subjecting prospective students to multiple expenses and stress, the Post UME Screening itself is not immune from the scourge of examination malpractice that is destroying the country and whether the Post UME Screening will stand the test, only time will tell (Yusuf, 2007). At the core of the challenge is disqualifying potential students on the basis of not having the required passes in Mathematics and English or having failed in those subjects at the secondary level or West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and other relevant examination. The minimum passes in these two subjects are also a requirement for entry into any accredited tertiary institution in Nigeria for the study of any discipline See Nigerian University Commission, (FGN, 2007) conditional Admissions into Tertiary Institutions. But this research therefore, wants to investigate the entry qualification and students' academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between the entry qualification and students' academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions. The specific objective of this study therefore is to:

1. Determine the relationship between students' entry qualification and their academic achievement in degree awarding institutions in Gombe State.

2. Determine the relationship between students’ mode of entry and their academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions.

Research Hypotheses

To guide the conduct of this study, the following hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students’ entry qualification and their academic achievement in degree awarding institutions in Gombe State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between students’ mode of entry and their academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions.

Methodology

This study employ correlational research design, the area of the study was Gombe state. Gombe State is in the Centre of the North East geographical zone of Nigeria. The target population of this study covers the 3 years total number of students who graduated from faculty of Education Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere. There were 7 tertiary institutions in Gombe State, at the time of the study out of which 2 institutions were purposive sampled. The total population is 428 students’ folders. A purposive sampling technique was used in this study. The population sample for this study was made up to 428 students’ folders from the institutions under study from 2013/2014 – 2015/2016 academic sessions using balloting technique, a pro forma was administered to each institution selected for data collection. Jebson, (2002) was of the view that researchers used large samples in order to reduce error deviation from target population 10% of the students population was fair enough sample for this research. The research instrument for this study were the students’ entry qualification, mode of entry and students’ academic achievement (CGPA grades for 2013/2014 – 2015/2016 academic sessions). However the researcher designs two (2) pro forma for data collection. It obtain information on students number, O-Level result, Mode of entry, and CGPA scores, it also contained the name of school, faculty, and academic session in particular. This was coded in accordance with the laid down standard of the National Board for Technical Education [N.B.T.E]. A format for data collection is design by the researcher to also generate types of entry qualification in students’ folders.

In order to determine the validity of the instruments, opinion of professionals in the Department of Science Education in Modibbo Adama University of Technology Yola, is ascertained. After the construction of the instrument, three (3) experts validated instrument for both content and face validity. Based on the comments, suggestions, and corrections made by the experts, some items are dropped, other modified and final corrected copy were administered to the target sample of this study. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 and 0.92 was obtained which shows a high reliability.

The researcher collect an introductory letter from the Head of Department of Science Education, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola which was used for seek permission from Deans of faculty of the sampled institutions to allow the researcher have access to the data needed with the help of research assistants (RA’s). A pro forma will be given to the institutions for endorsement who directed the researcher to students’ folders for the data. The data collected was subjected to statistical analysis for appropriate interpretations to achieve the set objectives of the study and to lay foundation for testing the formulated hypotheses. In other to answer the null hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used.

Findings

Students graduated from Faculty of Education in Gombe State University and Federal University of kashere from 2013/2014 – 2015/2016 academic sessions.

Sessions	GSU Faculty of Education	FUK Faculty of Education	Total
2013/2014	83	0	83

2014/2015	94	0	94
2015/2016	97	154	251
Total	274	154	428

Source: Academic Offices, Gombe State University and Federal University of Kashere, 2017

Keys:

GSU- Gombe State University

FUK- Federal University Kashere

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students’ entry qualification and their academic achievement in degree awarding institutions in Gombe State.

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistic for Relationship between Students’ Entry Qualification and Their Academic Achievement in Degree Awarding Institutions in Gombe State.

Model		Salary	Job performance
Students’ Entry Qualification	Pearson Correlation	1	.074
	Sig.(2- tailed)		.823
	N	428	166
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.074	1
	Sig.(2- tailed)	.823	
	N	428	428

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between students’ entry qualification and their academic achievement was investigated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient, which indicated significant relationship, since $p < 0.05$. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, $\rho = 0.82$, $n = 428$, $p < 0.05$, with moderate level of students’ entry qualification and their academic achievement

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between students’ mode of entry and their academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistic for Relationship between Students’ Mode of Entry and Their Academic Achievement in Gombe State Tertiary Institutions.

Model		Promotion	Job performance
Students’ Mode of Entry	Pearson Correlation	1	.080
	Sig.(2- tailed)		.723
	N	428	428
Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.080	1
	Sig.(2- tailed)	.723	
	N	428	428

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between students’ mode of entry and their academic achievement was investigated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, which indicated significant relationship, since $p < 0.05$. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. There was a strong correlation between the two variables, $\rho = 0.72$, $n = 428$, $p < 0.05$, with moderate level of students’ mode of entry and their academic achievement.

Conclusion

On the basis of finding of the study it was concluded that students' entry qualification, students' mode of entry have significant relationship with students' academic achievement in Gombe State tertiary institutions.

Recommendation

1. Students from certificate entry qualification need monitoring and mentoring to ensure better academic performance. A special bridging program can be conducted to all new students to help them adapt to the university learning environment.
2. The use of technology such as e-learning can also benefits students with different entry qualification since students can independently review the lesson at their convenience.

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