

Comparative Analysis of Students' Scores in Joint Admission and Matriculation Examinations and Screening Tests in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to find out whether there is any significant relationship between students' scores in Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination and the screening tests conducted by Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The population of the study was 120 students of technology and vocational education department from which a sample of 50 was chosen randomly. Data collected was analyzed using product moment condition. The results showed that there was a negative condition - 0.7785, which means that students' JAMB scores did not correlate positively with their screening tests scores. Based on the findings it was recommended that the university management should emphasize students' scores in the screening test more than JAMB scores in its admission of candidates for their various degree programmes.*

Keywords: JAMB, Screening Test, Comparative Analysis, Decree, Technology and Vocational Education

1. Introduction

In the early university years in Nigeria when the system of government in Nigeria was decentralized, all the universities in Nigeria belonged to the Federal government, therefore, the proof of admission into these institutions was decidedly autonomous if not individualistic among the various government universities. Thus until 1979 when Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) made its debut, we had each of the few Universities in existence then organizing concessional examination to select intending candidates for admission into the university system.

So, in those early years, JAMB could not have been relevant to universities admission as it was not even in existence. JAMB came into being in the context of the emergent move for the centralization of the admission system in the country. First, it was a question of the central government taking over the regional universities on the excuse that higher education needed to be administered for the propagation of national unity and equitable development. The warped logic was that for this to be done the central government had to have proprietary rights over these universities.

The process had been preceded by the forceful seizure of the resources located in these regions by the federal government and the creation of states from twelve in 1976 to thirty six in late 90's and Abuja (the seat of the Federal Government). Within this period of time, the number of universities had grown tremendously with no commensurate infrastructures to match these increases.

JAMB was given a legal instrument with the introduction of Decree No 2 of 1978 promulgated on February 13, 1978. The instrument was further amended by Decree No 33 of 1989 taking effect from December 7, 1989 which empowered JAMB to carry out the following functions:

- Conduct matriculation examination for entry into all Universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria.
- Appoint examiners, moderators, invigilators, members of the subject panels and committees and other persons with respect to matriculation examinations and any other matters incidental there to or connected therewith.
- Place suitably qualified candidates in the tertiary institutions and having taken into account:
 - (a) The vacancies available in each institution.
 - (b) The guidelines approved for each institution.
- Collate and disseminate information on all matters relating to admission and finally.
- Carry out other duties as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all functions conferred on it under or pursuant to this Decree (Adeniran, 2006).

Since its existence, JAMB had lived up to its responsibilities of conducting hitch-free and acceptable examinations from a few thousands in 1979 to 763, 057 in 2001. But as the populations continue to grow into millions (about 2.8m in 2013), it is doubtful whether the capacity of this organization has grown in the same proportion for ensuring strict supervision, releasing substantive results, computerization of all functions with associated problems. Candidates violate JAMB instructions with impunity, thereby causing lawlessness at examination centers. These growing irrelevances made some private and state universities to design a way of admitting students beside JAMB by introducing pre-degree programmes.

Over the years, various government policies at various levels of governance had directly or indirectly affected the quality of education in the country. It started with regions having each university with flagrant non-consideration of whether these states could sustain the universities or not (Inyiagu, 2009).

This actually led to the inability of JAMB to lend a corresponding carrying capacity for these institutions, which resulted in the pronouncement of former Minister of Education, Obaji (2005) in Paris, France while revealing her educational reforms at UNESCO general conference under the heading "I want to sanitize the tertiary level" that each tertiary institution should screen their JAMB candidates. She observed that reports have shown that there is no correlation between JAMB scores and students actual performances. Some reports according to the Minister, quoted that the best students are those who score between 180 and 210, and she tried to confirm it from many universities and found out that it was the same story all over the place, as JAMB score is at variance with students output. Mrs. Obaji further stated that she sought presidential approval before asking individual universities to further screen their students after JAMB score.

It was also found out according to Mimiko, (2010) that this policy is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. The well development countries of the world are not left out according to the Minister. This will enable us to have the right quality of students in our various tertiary institutions; it will take care of ills by giving admission to those who are ready to study.

In a swift reaction, some members of the House of Representative faulted the directive of the minister and instructed her to rescind her decision and even asked those universities who had complied with the earlier directive to refund the money collected back to the affected candidates. The universities affected included Universities of Agriculture, Makurdi in Benue States, Olabisi Onabanjo University in Ogun State and Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos. Luck was on the side of the former minister as notable educationists in the country supported and the policy. Professor Samuel Tunder Bajah while delivering a lecture under the auspices of the Nigeria Academy of Education on the topic "candidates are tarnishing JAMBs' credibility" said that the rising number of candidates sitting for the University Matriculation Examinations (UME) each year is one of the reasons the JAMB is having difficulties in conducting credible university entrance examinations (Samuel, 2006). He further informed that many of the universities that conducted the test expressed satisfaction with the first conduct of the test.

Ezekwesili (2006) encouraged all Nigerian universities administrations to start organizing screening examinations across the country. She however advised that candidates should not be asked to pay money and that it should absolutely free.

At the same forum, Mr. Joseph Alade, a retired director of the Federal Ministry of Education, called on education stakeholders to abide by the policy so that JAMB can find its job easier. He further noted that unless members of the society stop aiding and abetting examination malpractices, JAMB cannot make progress. Professor Abraham Imofe in his own view said that the reason why the number of candidates taking UME is rising is due to the preference for University Education.

Fapounda (2010) observed that screening test will, to a large extent eliminate examination malpractices. In a related development, Babalola (2013) was happy that his constructive criticism that JAMB has lost its credibility has provoked the desired debate. He was also happy to note that the screening tests carried out have proved many people right. He further reiterated that most candidates who scored between 280 and 300 never turned up for screening. A candidate who scores 303 in JAMB got only 28% in screening test, whereas one who scored only 220 in JAMB scored 48% in screening test. Invariably those who performed well were those who scored between 210 and 240 marks, (Babalola, 2013).

Objective of this study therefore was to determine whether there is a relationship between students' JAMB scores and the screening test scores in Ebonyi State University. One hypothesis was tested in the study. Thus;

H₀: There is no significant relationship between students' JAMB scores and the screening scores.

2. Method

The area of the study is Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State and the population was (126) candidates, out of which 50 candidates were randomly sampled. The data collected is a secondary one i.e. the scores from JAMB and the screening scores from the University.

3. Results

Table 1: Mean scores of JAMB and Screening test scores

		Mean	Correlation	Remark
1.	Mean JAMB scores	217.48	- 0.7785	Very low
2.	Mean screening test scores	35.4		

The data in table 1 show that the correlation coefficient obtained is - 0.7785 which is very low. The interpretation is that the JAMB did not correlate well with screening tests scores.

4. Findings

From the results of the data analysis which is presented in table 1 above, it was found that there is no significant relationship between the JAMB score of the students and the screening tests scores of the students. This is in line with the views of Babalola (2013) who said that JAMB scores cannot significantly correlate with the screening tests scores because the JAMB scores are in most cases not true representations of the candidates' capabilities.

5. Conclusion

On the bases of the findings, it was concluded that JAMB scores of students are not a good predictor of students' performance in the universities and therefore screening tests should be strongly emphasized in the final admission of students into Nigerian universities. It is therefore, recommended that all Nigerian tertiary institutions should

organize screening tests for all the JAMB candidates sent to them for admission into various academic programmes.

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