

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY
MATRICULATION EXAMINATION SCORES
AND THE SCREENING SCORES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA (UNN)**

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ABSTRACT

In recent past there has been high level of criticism against the conduct of University Matriculation Examination (UME), an examination conducted by Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in Nigeria as unreliable. Apart from the high level of malpractice associated with the examination, there was also categorization of centres as special or ordinary, depending on the strength of ones pocket. Because of the seemingly unreliable JAMB scores, coupled with the fact that some candidates who scored highly in UME could not defend such scores on admission, some Universities in Nigeria introduced post JAMB screening exercise. The University of Nigeria was among the first universities to carry out this exercise which was ab-initio recognized and supported by the immediate past Minister of Education in Nigeria.

With the introduction of this post – JAMB screening, it would appear that the problems of admitting wrong candidates into our universities has been solved. However, the resources required in carrying out this screening exercise, both human and material is enormous and overwhelming. It therefore became necessary to examine the two sets of scores to see

whether it is proper to continue with the screening or use the already structure of JAMB to do the placement exercise as was used to be the case. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistic was the analytical tool for this study which involved the placement scores of students who wrote both the JAMB and screening examinations in some departments at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 2006/2007 academic year. Far reaching conclusion and recommendations were made based on the result of the study.

INTRODUCTION

The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established in Nigeria in the year 1976 for some obvious reasons part of which were:

- Irregularities in West African Examinations Council's(WAEC) examination
- Multiple admission by the decentralized admission policy which denied others opportunity
- Comparability of standards problem across universities based on minimum standards requirement
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The board was established to streamline and co-ordinate admission practice in Nigeria (Ezeudu, Agwaga &Agbaegbu 1997)

The functions of JAMB are well specified in the 1978Act establishing it and the JAMB decree no 36 of 1989. The National Policy of Education (NPE) among other important objectives highlighted the need to give equal education opportunities to all citizens of Nigeria (FRN 1983 1st ed).

JAMB right from inception has been making effort toward this direction of equal opportunities. For instance it introduced the variable of increase in admission quota to educationally disadvantaged states. It also introduced catchments states and locality to match with merit in admission .

The first examination of the board which was conducted in May 1978 was without hitches. Since the inception up till the present times JAMB examinations have remained about the most turbulent examinations in Nigeria(Nwana 1978). Turbulent in the sense that it is coming at a point in time when the young adolescence is trying to plunge into life head long thereby entering into all kinds of deals to meet up with their seemingly perched thinking of life. The embers of this turbulence are continually being fired by societal influence. Parents see fulfillment in what their wards will be and not in what they are, thereby aiding and abating this dangerous cankerworm called examination malpractice.

One needs to observe the environmental concomitants during JAMB examination in some areas, such as high rate of infiltration on school compound including swift vehicular movement through which malpractice is aided and abated. Some staff quarters are converted to mini clearing houses for bridging examination gaps (Umo 2005). Some examiners are bribed into allowing unauthorized materials into the hall. Some of them are even used as organ of dissemination of worked answers. In this milieu, the school environment which is supposed to be characterized with calmness is infested with noise, rowdiness, disturbance and misdemeanor

JAMB has tried so much to aver this ugly situation through the help of security agents.. JAMB has also used different numbering systems and codes for different subject combinations to discourage mass cheating .A lot of cancellation of results have been made to no avail. For instance , in the 2005/2006 JAMB exercise, the result of the whole of Nsukka zone, comprising about eight big towns in Enugu state were cancelled which resulted in blacklisting the affected centres from taking the examination for upward of 5 years.

It has become obvious that JAMB alone cannot single handedly solve this problem due to so many intervening factors that come into play. Nwafor &Onuoha (2001) identified many factors that cause examination malpractice in Nigeria such as psychological stress (Ugwuegbu, 1975) due to fear of failure , insufficient preparation for examination, general high level of corruption in the society which includes the home, the school and the community, teachers` lack of motivation and devotion, laxity on the part of the students, their lack of discipline and low academic ability among others. This means that many more organizations and institutions have to join hands in tackling this issue. Umo(2006) emphasized mapping the boundaries of stake holders involvement as both the government,Parent-Teacher association,and indeed the entire society have to be involved in clearing this mess.The implication of this mess is the seemingly unreliable UME scores meaning that people who are not qualified to gain admission find them selves in the four walls of higher institutions.

The effect of this seemingly unreliable UME scores on the undergraduates can never be over emphasized. This is the genesis of cultism in the universities. Because of fear of failure, any time

examination time table is pasted these disgruntled elements will ignite trouble and confusion to force school authorities to postpone examinations indefinitely. Therefore the universities become infested with students that never passed their examinations and never graduated. Lecturers are threatened , assaulted and intimidated by this “miss road” students who must find a way of bulldozing their way over the examinations.

The idea of Post-JAMB examination screening which was muted to the university authorities by one time minister of education Mrs Obaji gradually became a normal practice by many universities in Nigeria. But the screening exercise is becoming too expensive. Some Universities charged as far as ten thousand naira (N 10,000.00) fee per candidate to sit in for the examination. This is why JAMB in the 2007/2008 admission exercise is insisting that no fees should be charged for screening .By JAMB`s definition screening exercise should be more of oral interview than written work which is more resource intensive. It appears that parents share the same views with JAMB on this issue of fee hike which is now an additional burden to them.

It is important to note that UNN was among the few universities that first started the screening exercise in Nigeria. Among these universities UNN charged least fees. UNN has satisfactorily carried out the screening for two consecutive years. Therefore it becomes necessary to find out whether the UME and Screening scores are related or not.

Hence this study seeks to find out how correlated UME and Screening scores are for the 2006/2007 admission exercise at the UNN. Specifically the study sought to find out;

- (1) the correlation coefficients of UME and Screening scores in art science, social science and engineering courses

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RESEARCH METHOD

This study is an ex –post facto one requiring the collection and analysis of existing data. The University of Nigeria Nsukka is the area for this study. The UME results and Screening scores of applicants in the 9 faculties in the university constituted the target population for the study.. Systematic sampling technique was adopted in selecting the sample for this study. 50 per-cent of the cases of candidates that sought admission in each of 9 faculties were selected and used for this study. The analytical tool were the Pearson~s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the t- test of r for testing the significance of the correlation.

RESULT

The results are presented in tabled based on individual research questions.

- (1) What are the correlation coefficients of UME and Screening scores in the various faculties of the University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Table 1 Pearsons Product Moment Correlation Coefficients and t-test values of UME and Screening scores

Faculty	r	t-test	Rank
Arts	0.042	0.184	9th
Social Sciences	0.056	0.153	8th
Biological Sciences	0.271	0.00066	5th
Engineering	0.48	0.003	3rd
Environmental Studies	0.17	0.0008	6th
Medicine	0.54	0.254	2nd
Agriculture	0.67	0.232	1st
Physical Sciences	.162	0.003	7th
Education	0.42	0.004	4th

The data on table 1 shows that the correlation coefficients range from 0.67 for agriculture which is the highest to 0.042 for Arts which is the lowest

Using the benchmarks from Nwana (1988) to qualify the correlation coefficients, it would appear that only Agriculture (1st) and Medicine (2nd) had high correlation coefficients. Engineering (3rd) and Education (4th) had little below average correlations while the others including Biological Sciences (5th), Environmental Sciences (6th), Physical Sciences (7th), Social Sciences (8th) and Arts (9th) had very low coefficients. This means that only 2 faculties out of the 9 faculties had correlation coefficients that suggest good positive relationships between UME and Screening scores and they are highly professional areas. Therefore something is wrong with other faculties. Either the UME score or Screening score is faulty or is fraught with error scores.

DISCUSSION

Thorndike and Hagen (1974) explained the classical theory of measurement as a ratio between the True score and Error score and posits that the higher the error score the less reliable the test instrument . The result of this study shows that either the UME or the Screening test is unreliable

An argument that arose in a youth forum organized by the National Television Authority (NTA) “ *Inside out with Agatha*” suggests that malpractice is societal and both examinations involve the society ,hence they are not free from malpractice. However it appears that UME is more prone to malpractice as the invigilators are heterogeneous while those of the university screening are responsible academics made up of group of who are challenged to protect their integrity and profession as invigilators. Also the screening environment is is more friendly to examination ethics with halls and seats well arranged and well spaced by event managers . apart from this serious efforts and mechanisms are put in place to check impersonation. The only common element in both examinations is the questions which are pulled from the same item bank . As insiders and psychometricians,the writers of this paper having witnessed both the UME and and Screening environments at UNN there is every evidence to conclude that UNN screening appear to be malpractice free AT least no candidate enters the examination hall with cell phone or other telegraphic devices which have been discovered by JAMB as the most potent means of perpetrating malpractice in recent times. There is also no impersonation in the screening as candidates are properly interviewed and interrogated with their passports scrutinized before they are allowed to sit for the examination.

Medicine and Agriculture appear to be hitch free because people entering into both professions appear to be focused and they have discovered themselves , as one thing is gaining admission another is sustenance in the programme.

The finding of this study suggests that malpractice is more in Arts, Social Science, Biological Science and Physical Science. This implies that people think that they will always do well in them whether they have the aptitude or not. Candidates seem to be running away from courses that require very low teacher-student interaction ratio.

The cartoon in one of the Nigerian daily newspapers , the Saturday Vanguard ,June 9,2007 said it all *examination malpractice is now a monster bullying JAMB like a child and snatching away her question papers.* The newspaper puts up a pertinent question, *who is really in charge of the question papers- Malpractice or JAMB?* See Appendix 1.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discovered low level of correlation between UME scores conducted by JAMB and the screening scores conducted at the UNN. This paper also indicted JAMB as contributing enormously to the low level of correlation due to the malpractice which has eaten deep into the examination process. This paper also emphasizes that though JAMB is not resting on her oars and watching the malpractice to continue unabated, other agencies like the universities have to contribute in the cleansing struggle by conducting screening tests to further enhance the reliability of JAMB scores. If this screening test takes place for upwards of five years, malpractice in JAMB will fizzle out as candidates will know that JAMB alone does not provide the answer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study;

- (1) The screening exercise for admission as a post JAMB admission process has to continue not only in the University of Nigeria but in all other universities in Nigeria.
- (2) Candidates who scored highly in JAMB and very low in Screening have to be interrogated and handed over to law enforcement agents if they are not able to provide sufficient answers for the disparity
- (3) The qualification to take screening examination shall be the minimum pass mark in UME, ie, 160 and not 200. That is 40 % for each of the four subjects and not 50%. This is because it appears that most of those high scores are not reliable. In doing so the effect of the UME scores will be reduced to the barest minimum

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