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## **The University Matriculation Examination as a Predictor of Performance in Post University Matriculation Examination: a Model for Educational development in the 21st Century**

**Uhunmwangho, S. O.** - Institute of Public Administration and Extension Services, University of Benin, P.M.B. 1154 Benin City, Nigeria

E-mail: [Uhunmwangho4you@yahoo.com](mailto:Uhunmwangho4you@yahoo.com)

GSM: +2348059022296; +2348028503165

&

**Ogunbadeni, Oluwakemi** - Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

### **A b s t r a c t**

*In the development process of any nation, education occupies a key position in the scheme of things. It is the bedrock of every nation's economy and is an indispensable instrument for national development.. In fact, that is why most Universities take as their motto: knowledge for service, knowledge for excellence, knowledge*

*for advancement etc which can be described as a “corrective” party of government. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to examine the relative strength and effectiveness of UME as admission criteria for selection into a Nigerian University. The study adopted a correlational design. 500 pairs of scores of candidates in UME and Post UME were obtained using stratified random sampling techniques from five Faculties in University of Benin and analyzed using t-test and simple correlation co-efficient. The results of the study revealed a low and statistically significant correlation  $r = 0.088$  between UME and PUME scores. The relationship between the scores was inverse and there was a significant difference in the scores of UME and PUME ( $t = 3.51, p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that high marks in UME did not reveal the academic performance of students and that admission based on merit only from the UME scores could bring into the Universities not the best qualified students.*

**Key words:** Education, Student, Examination, Nigeria, University, Admission

## **Introduction**

The modality for admitting students into Nigerian Universities was on institutional basis until 1978 when JAMB conducted its first placement examination. The JAMB Decree No. 2 of 1978 established the Board. The system of admission revealed a lot of problems among which were the issues of multiple application, general untidiness or uncoordinated system of examinations and high cost implications on the candidates. Under the system, Ogonor and Olubor (2002) discovered that it was possible for an applicant to receive offer for admission into two or more universities at the expense of other qualified candidates. In attempt to solving these problems, the Federal Government established JAMB as a centralized examining body, saddled with the responsibility of conducting placement examination into Nigerian higher institutions of learning. The Board was restructured in 1990 by the government, assigned with the responsibility of admitting students based on recommended criteria as

follows: 40% merit, 30% catchments area, 20% educational disadvantaged states and 10% discretion (Angulu, 1988).

Based on these criteria, candidates with higher scores were denied admission while those with relatively lower scores gained admission because they fell within the stipulated categories. Couple with these criteria for admission was the fact that the number of eligible candidates for admission had exceeded the available spaces while the enrolment for UME kept increasing yearly hence selection became more competitive (Salim and Falayajo 2003). In an attempt to qualify for placement and secure pass marks based on merit, some desperate candidates had to be involved in pirated versions of the test before the date of examination and as a result of this development; there had been reported cases of examination malpractices of varying degree. According to this scholar, some conscientious university administrators and lecturers were highly concerned about this disparity. It was believed that, that was why some universities made moves recently to make the incoming students write the Post UME organized by the University after the release of UME results.

Hence on Friday, 23rd September, 2005, a 31-member Committee tagged UNIBEN Post UME (PUME) was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor in the Senate Chamber of the University of Benin. Suffice it to say that the Committee produced a format for examining the anticipated candidates in the University of Benin by multiple choice questions in four days starting from 25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2005. Attendance was not only large each day, but consistent with a very positive correlation of the position of the University of Benin as the most sought after University; hence the name UNIBEST (Vice-Chancellor's Report, 2005:1).

### **The Problems**

The problem that faced Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) when it used UME scores to select candidates into first year undergraduate classes was that of the predictive validity of the assessment instrument. In the actual fact, meeting JAMB's criteria

should predict future performance in the University. The question then is to what extent is this actually so? JAMB had been repeatedly criticized over the years regarding its selection and admission procedures. Such critics included Agbonifoh and Dimowo (1985), Ogonor and Olubor (2002). Ejikonye (2004) reported about candidates whose incredible high scores did not reflect in their own level of intelligence while some candidates who managed to secure just a little above 200 marks by their own efforts and were privileged to secure admission were performing excellently well. According to this scholar, some conscientious University Administrators and lecturers were highly concerned about this disparity. It was believed that, that was why some universities made moves recently to make the incoming students write the Post UME organized by the University after the release of UME results and Direct Entry.

### **Objectives**

The specific objective of this paper is to examine the relative strength and effectiveness of UME and admission criteria for selection into a Nigerian University.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

It is only ideal that some of the terms used in this paper be clarified which are:

*UME*: As used in this context, this means University Matriculation Examination.

*JAMB*: In this paper, this means Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board.

*PUME*: Post University Matriculation Examination which is a test conducted by individual Universities in Nigeria.

*SSCE*: Senior School Certificate Examination

*WAEC*: West Africa Examination Council

*GCE*: General Certificate Examination

*O/L*: Ordinary Level

*UNIBEN*: University of Benin

*UNIBEST*: University of Benin the Best.

### **Theoretical Exposition**

The particular theory that can sufficiently act as guide for the analysis of issues in this paper is group theory. The group theory framework is perhaps the most ambitious methodology in the study of social sciences. The most distinctive characteristic of the group theory to the conduct of political analysis is the theoretical assumption which sees society, the political process and the entire political process as nothing but a gigantic network of interacting groups. The exponents and principle promoters of the group theory are of the view that every society includes within it a large number of groups which remain engaged in perpetual struggle for power and domination over each other. For instance, to them politics could be understood only in terms of interactions between various groups. They tried to establish the group rather than the individual or the society as the basic unit of analysis in the study of politics. The first explicit and systematic development of the group theory as it relates to analytic study of political systems was provided by A.F. Bentley in his book “The process of Government” which was published in 1908.

However, the work of Bestly was given boost nearly half a century later when David Truman advanced it further in his book governmental process, the analytical impact of group theory in 1951. Other scholars of this theory are Robert Darl, John Starte Mill among others. Bestly was interested in de-emphasizing the institutions and re-emphasizing processes. He conceived the group as a mass of activity and not a collection of individuals. Accordingly, he defined a group as a certain portion of men of society taken not as a physical mass out-off from other masses of men, but as a mass of who participates in its form like in many other group activities (Ojo, 1989).

In a nutshell, this framework is associated with this work because of the characteristic nature of the groups that make up the polity under study. For example, the nature of perpetual struggle for power and admonition over each other by major ethnic groups.

### **Literature Review**

According to Vice-Chancellor's report, on day one, which was the day in which PUME candidates seeking admission into Faculties of Art and Social Sciences took their examinations, of the 4,727 candidates expected from JAMB print out, only 4,188 candidates turn up (Vice-Chancellor's Report, 2005:2)..

It is pertinent to note that some students who gained admission into Universities with high marks in UME were found to be unable to cope with the University education. Ogedengbe (2000) discovered that candidates admitted into Nigerian Universities through JAMB/UME, many of which were credited with high marks such as 260, 270 were being asked to withdraw due to intolerable poor academic performance. In a related development, it is also strikingly revealing that even the process of award of diplomas in the University of Benin that qualified candidates for direct entry admission was being seriously compromised. For example, out of 900 applicants for direct entry into the Faculty of Arts, only 157 passed the simple screening test, 98 of over 500 students in the Faculty of Life Sciences passed, 87 of the 1,200 applicants for Physical Sciences passed and just 174 of the 2,000 applicants for Faculty of Social Sciences filtered through the elementary screening (UNIBEN Convocation Address, 2007).

The factors responsible for this poor academic background may not be farfetched. The examination candidates are registered with "special centers" for the entrance examination into Universities, Senior School Certificate Examinations, NECO, GCE, JAMB etc. Examination malpractice has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. It has established its root so deeply that it has almost become an acceptable social norm. This is purely because of the caliber of people who are always involved in its practice. (Eboakoke, 2008:46).

He further stated that a visit to any centre for SSCE, GCE, NECO, NABTEB and Joint Matriculation Examination Centres (UME) will convince you of this fact. That is why examination candidate from other states travel far and wide to very remote towns for these examinations. Some owners of private schools and lesson centers facilitate and engineer examination malpractice or cheating to favour their clients – students. School Principals and officials of WAEC, JAMB or NECO aid and abet cheating during these examinations because they are given monetary inducement (Okoye, 2009:41). The 1977 nationwide WASCE leakage which provided the materials for Chukwuemeka Ike’s novel called “expo ‘77” is a child’s play when compared with what is happening now in Nigeria examination malpractice is a monster that stalls national growth and educational development.

Accordingly, it is expected of University graduate to have been found not wanting in learning and character, but can we say so of Universities in Nigeria?

The study area is Nigeria. Therefore, the current 36 States in Nigeria can be seen in the political map below (Fig 2).

**Research Question:** *What is the relative strength and effectiveness of UME as admission criteria?*

**Research Hypothesis:** *There is no significant difference in the scores of students in UME and Post UME.*

**Figure 2: The Federal Republic of Nigeria Map - Political Map of Nigeria**



Source: Wikipedia caught 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

## Methodology

This paper adopted a correlational design. The independence variable for the paper was the UME score while the dependent variable was the post UME score. The population was made up of candidates seeking admission to University of Benin against 2005/2006 academic session. University of Benin was chosen because it is a Federal Government institution; hence has been the popularly sought for by candidates and



it adheres strictly to the JAMB/UME scores for admission criteria. The sample size consisted of 500 pairs of scores of students in UME and PUME, selected through stratified random sampling from five Faculties (Arts, Social Sciences, Science, Law and Education). The information on students UME and Post UME scores was collected from Admission Office, Vice-Chancellor's report to Senate and Congregation and also Pro-Chancellor's Convocation speech of the University of Benin.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data were analyzed using simple correlation co-efficient and t-test.

**Research Question:** *What is the relative strength and effectiveness of UME as admission criteria?*

The 500 pairs of scores of students in UME and PUME were subjected by simple correlation co-efficient. The table showed the relationship.

**Table One: Relationship between UME and PUME Scores**

<b>Examination</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>r</b>
PUME	500	172.990	94.73	-0.088
UME	500	246.350	25.08	

**Source:** Field Survey (2012).

From the result,  $r = -0.088$ . The relationship is low and inverse. The correlation between the two sets of scores (UME and PUME) is low.

The value of  $r$  is negative. There is a perfect but inverse relationship between the two sets of scores. This implies that those who scored very high marks in UME scored very low marks in PUME.

**Hypothesis:** *There is no significant difference in the scores of students in UME and PUME.*

Table 2 is used to access whether a significant difference existed between the pairs of scores

**Table Two: t-test showing the difference between UME and PUME Scores**

Examination	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	r
UME	500	246.350	25.07	3.51
PUME	500	172.99	94.73	

p<0.05 (Significant)

**Source:** Field Survey (2012).

The result revealed a significant difference between UME and PUME scores ( $t = 3.51$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### **Discussion on finding**

The relative strength and effectiveness of UME and admission criteria was found to be relatively low;  $r = 0.088$  and the relationship was negative. This was found to be consistent with the findings of Onwu (1989), Ogonor and Olubor (2002), and Olaniyan (2003). They found that UME was not a significant determinant of students' performance and that over 50% of the undergraduate passed in second class lower division irrespective of their scores in the matriculation examination.

The second concern of this paper was to determine the relationship between candidates' performance in UME and PUME. On the whole, the UME scores appeared not to reflect candidates' performance in the PUME qualifying examination. From the result of the correlation, there was a perfect inverse relationship. The implication of this was that those who scored very high marks in UME score very low in PUME. This indicated that high marks in UME did not reveal the

academic performance of students and hence admission based on merit from the UME scores only could bring into the universities less qualified students.

It is pertinent to note that some students who gained admission into Universities with high marks in UME were found to be unable to cope with the University education. Ogedengbe (2000) discovered that candidates admitted into Nigerian Universities through JAMB/UME, many of which were credited with high marks such as 260, 270 were being asked to withdraw due to intolerable poor academic performance. The findings on the hypothesis indicated that a significant difference existed in the scores of students in UME and PUME.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

There is no doubt that in a correlation study of this type, some other extraneous variables could have interfered in the relationship between UME and PUME more so that the PUME qualifying examination was not a standardized examination and the environments under which both examinations (UME and PUME) were conducted differ.

It is very clear from the result that the University of Benin Post UME has clearly emerged as a better assessment predictor for our prospective students, moreso when the question papers were well reviewed at the SSCE, WAEC and GCE O/L standard. It is therefore recommended that potential researchers compare the Post UME terms and scores across Universities for standardization and model for educational development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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