ENTRY QUALIFICATION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF DIRECT ENTRY STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated direct entry qualification and students' academic achievement in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin. The study was aimed at ascertaining a difference in the academic achievement of Direct Entry students with different entry qualifications such as NCE, OND and those with JUPEB entry. Seven research questions were raised and six research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. This study employed the ex-post facto research design. The total population was 164 direct entry students of the 2018/2019 academic session students' folders. The population sample for this study was made up of all 164, a proforma was used for data collection. The proforma named, Students Record Profile Form which contained the classification of 300 Level students in the 2019/2020 academic session based on their direct entry qualification (JUPEB, NCE AND OND), their sex and their corresponding standardized scores in the faculty courses (EDU 311, EDU 321, EDU 312 and EDU 322) examinations held in the 2019/2020 academic session. The scores were standardized using the z-score and t-score statistics. Data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency tables and percentages) to answer research question one while research questions two to six were hypothesised. Null hypotheses one to three and five were tested with the Independent Samples T-test, and the fourth and sixth null hypothesis was tested with a Two-way Analysis of Variance at 0.05 level of significance adopting SPSS Version 21. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that there is a \significant difference in the academic achievement of direct-entry students with respect to their entry qualifications. A recommendation was made that students with certificate entry qualifications need monitoring and mentoring to ensure better academic performance.

KEYWORDS: Entry Qualification, Direct Entry and Academic Achievement

INTRODUCTION

University education in Nigeria is one of the paramount academic platforms that many seek to reach. Despite the increasing number of universities in Nigeria, there is an even greater increase in the number of applicants to the universities each year (Isikeh, 2019). This plethora of available candidates makes the selection of quality candidates into institutions quite tedious. This is sadly accompanied by an observed poor performance of university students (Aremu, 2000; Adeosun, 2017; Oshodi et al., 2018) As a result of this, several schemes have been put in place to manage the plethora of applicants to these universities while attempting to maintain the selection of quality students who will perform well in the university. So there is an observable shift in the way students are being admitted into universities; from the immediate post-colonial era when universities were left to set their own admission standards under the National Universities Commission (NUC) to the formation of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

In 1978 JAMB was established by the federal government to regulate and essentially harmonize admission processes in universities. This the board did through an entrance exam called the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). Over time, however, there were increasing concerns about the credibility of JAMB's standards and processes and the board faced criticism.

This problem, together with the issue of too many applicants vying for limited spaces in universities led to more investigations into other means of admitting students into the university, specifically the direct entry mode which appears to provide an opportunity to students who fall below the standard for admission to improve their academic experience. A student whose UTME score is not up to the cut-off mark for the university and who is applying for limited slots in a particular course of choice may decide to instead enrol in a Polytechnic or college of education or a foundation program with his UTME score and then after successful completion of the polytechnic, college of education or foundation program will move forward to apply again to the university, but this time with an enriched educational experience.

Although JAMB and UTME are still very functional today and universities are mandated to factor in UTME in their candidate selection process, Universities have adopted this other mode to deal with a large number of yearly applicants, while also ensuring quality students are being selected for admission. However, embedded in this mode, are various entry qualifications. All these different entry qualifications represent different academic experiences and histories and could possibly represent the different academic achievements of students in universities. This is no different in the University of Benin which is unofficially regarded as one of the "Ivy League" schools of Nigeria.

The University of Benin since its inception in 1970 has always attracted a relatively large number of applicants yearly. In the 2018/2019 academic session, about 75,000 students applied to the university with about 1000 applying to the faculty of Education (Isikeh, 2019). This puts the faculty and the entire University at one of the most confronted with this issue of admitting quality students out of the many available applicants. The faculty of Education at the University of Benin allows three main qualifications for direct entry admission. These are the pre-degree programme qualification coordinated by the Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB), the National Certificate in Education (NCE) by Students who have completely

attended colleges of Education and the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) by polytechnic students.

The Pre-degree Programme by JUPEB consists of a minimum of one year of approved courses run separately in various universities' foundation programmes and an entrance exam conducted by the board based on which successful candidates are then given direct entry admissions into university courses at the 200-level. The NCE programme on the other hand involves a three-year course in an approved college of education after which a certificate is issued to the student with which they can apply as candidates for provisional direct entry admission into courses in the faculty of education at 200 Level. Lastly, the OND is the certificate given to polytechnic graduates for the first two years of a National Diploma Course which they can also use to apply for admission into the faculty at 200-Level. All three groups of students highlighted above have different academic experiences hence the difference in their entry qualifications into the faculty. The importance of these modes of entry lies in the fact that they are the basis on which candidates are selected for the faculty.

According to Adeyemi (2009), academic achievement means a measure of students' activities through examination within the context of a curriculum. That is, how an individual is able to demonstrate his or her intellectual abilities often observed through the individual's score in an examination. Hence, academic achievement refers to a measure of how well students have performed in the various assessment items set before them based on some criteria determined by professional educators. In assessing the academic achievement of students, a number of factors have been investigated which include university data such as semester GPA (Ahmed et al 2015), socioeconomic status (Mohamed & Waguih, 2017), student environment (Mueen et al 2016) and others. Among these factors, prior academic achievement which is defined by (Alyahyan & Dustegor (2020) as the historical baggage of students and student demographic data such as sex and age have been recognised as two very important factors that impact the prediction of students' academic performance.

Adeniyi (2003) and Ipaye (2004) as cited by Olajide et al (2015) reported that DE students were superior to their university matriculation examination counterparts in academic achievement. Stating further that DE students, specifically NCE students have a more relevant knowledge base on which their university academic experiences are built. NCE students especially in the Faculty of Education have a strong foundation on their relevant courses enriched by their college of education programme. This gives them an edge when they get into the university and so could make them perform better than their UTME or OND counterparts. This is reiterated by Olaoluniyi et al (2013) whose study indicated that students with NCE certificates performed better vis-a-vis their other counterparts in the faculty of education. Kpolovie et al (2014) whose findings stated that students who did a one-year preliminary programme performed better than their counterparts, however, disagree with the previous claim. He suggested that this may be due to their familiarisation with the environment, standards and processes of the university they are admitted to while those admitted through the NCE and OND are not opportune to be acquainted with the university in the same way.

One evident disparity is that all these studies despite the apparent difference in the educational experiences of National Certificate in Education holders, Ordinary National Degree holders and JUPEB pre-degree students, treated the various qualifications of direct entry as one unit, which makes it unclear as to the exact qualification or qualifications of direct entry that contributes more (or less) to the good academic performance of students. Notwithstanding, one

effective way to investigate the effectiveness of each direct entry qualification is to examine the academic achievement of the admitted students while in the university.

Over several discourses in education, arguments have been made regarding the extent to which sex influences the academic achievement of students in various courses in tertiary institutions. Several studies have hence supported that this factor has an impact on the academic achievement of students (Prewitt 2001; Okediran & Danesty, 2002; Akinade, 2010). While Akinade (2010) and Levin (2011) presented that the academic performance of male and female students do not have any statistically significant difference. Abimbola (2015) and Akinoso et al (2016) on the other hand, showed that female students outperformed their respective male counterparts. In light of the many other factors that could be used to access the academic achievement of university students, the focus of this present study is to investigate different direct entry qualifications for admission into the faculty of education at the University of Benin and their effect on students' academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

The continuously increasing number of university applicants yearly as against the limited number of available universities has become a case of concern. However, the poor performance of university students is of more dire concern. Various researchers have argued that the quality of students admitted into these universities is a contributive factor to this predicament with several researchers positing that Direct Entry students perform better academically (Adeniyi, 2014: Ipaye, 2004: Kpolovie et al 2014; Adeyemi (2009). This would suggest that the admission process should focus more on selecting students with direct entry qualifications. However, there remains a gap as to which Direct Entry qualification is actually most desirable. That is, which category of Direct Entry students actually perform better based on Direct Entry qualification? With various Direct Entry qualifications for admission obtainable nowadays, the search for the most efficient qualification that could help in selecting candidates of good quality for admission into universities becomes a problem on its own.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the various direct entry qualifications for admission and the academic achievement of three hundred level education students at the University of Benin.

Research Questions

In addressing the problem, the following research questions would be answered.

1. what percentage of DE students who have above-average achievement in the 300-level faculty courses of the 1019/2020 academic session belong to JUPEB, NCE and OND categories respectively?

2. Is there a significant difference in the mean score of direct entry students admitted into the University of Benin irrespective of their qualifications (JUPEB, NCE and OND) in 300 level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session?

3. Is there a significant difference in the mean score of male and female direct entry students in 300 level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session?

Hypotheses

Research questions 2 to 4 were hypothesized as follows:

1.   There is no significant difference in the mean score of direct entry students admitted into the University of Benin irrespective of their qualifications (JUPEB, NCE and OND) in the 300-level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session.

2.   There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female direct entry students in the 300-level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the ex-post facto research design. This design was adopted because the researcher has no control over the variables of the study. That is, the researcher does not manipulate the number or kind of students assigned to each direct entry qualification and their corresponding scores, rather the students are already classified into their various direct entry qualifications. The population for the study consists of all 164 three hundred level direct entry students of the 2019/2020 academic session admitted through JUPEB, NCE and OND direct entry qualifications in the faculty of Education, University of Benin. The sampling technique adopted for this study is the census sampling technique. This technique is being adopted because the number of direct entry students at the 300 Level in the faculty of education at the University of Nigeria is quite limited. It is hereby necessary to include all of them in the study.

The instrument for data collection is a Proforma named, Students Record Profile Form which contained the classification of 300 Level students in the 2019/2020 academic session based on their direct entry qualification (JUPEB, NCE AND OND), their sex and their corresponding standardised scores in the faculty courses (EDU 311, EDU 321, EDU 312 and EDU 322) examinations held in the 2019/2020 academic session. The scores were then standardized using the z-score and t-score statistics. The instrument for this study is a Proforma (Student Record Profile) which contained the list, including the sex of direct entry (JUPEB, NCE and OND) students in the Faculty of Education, University of Benin for the 2018/2020 academic session who should be in 300 Level in the 2019/2020 academic session and the corresponding scores of these direct entry (JUPEB, NCE and OND) students in EDU 311, EDU 321, EDU 312 and EDU322 examinations held in 2019/2020 academic session. Data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency tables and percentages) to answer research question one while research questions two to four were hypothesised. Null hypothesis one was tested using a one-way Analysis of Variance statistics, hypothesis two was tested using the Independent Samples T-test, and the third null hypothesis was tested with a Two-way Analysis of Variance at a 0.05 level of significance adopting SPSS Version 21.

FINDINGS

Research Question One: What percentage of Direct entry students who have above-average achievement scores in the 300-level faculty courses of the 1019/2020 academic session belong to JUPEB, NCE and OND categories respectively?

Table 1: Frequency Count of Students with Scores above Average

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	JUPEB	55	59.14	59.14
	NCE	32	34.41	34.41
	OND	6	6.45	6.45
	Total	93	100.0	100.0

Table 1 above shows the frequency count of students who scored above average in the faculty courses of the 2019/2020 academic session in faculty of education of the University of Benin. Out of the 154 direct entry students used for analysis, 93 students scored above the average of which 55 were JUPEB, 32 NCE and 6 OND students respectively. Students with JUPEB entry constituted 59.14 per cent of the total number of students who scored above average, while, NCE and OND students constituted 34.41 and 6.45 per cent respectively. Students with JUPEB have the highest per cent mean score of 59.14; followed by students with NCE with per cent mean score of 34.41 and students with OND with per cent mean score of 6.45. This implies that students from the three categories of entry qualification were all represented in the distribution of achievement scores above average.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the mean score of direct entry students admitted into the University of Benin irrespective of their qualifications (JUPEB, NCE and OND) in 300 level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Direct entry qualification by academic achievement

Qualification	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
JUPEB	109	48.21	8.376
NCE	35	54.33	6.851
OND	10	52.95	6.112
Total	154	49.91	8.324

Table 2 above shows a mean and standard deviation of qualifications as 48.21 and 8.376; 54.33 and 6.851 and 52.95 and 6.112 respectively for JUPEB, NCE and OND qualifications. The students with NCE qualifications have the highest mean performance.

Table 3: ANOVA of Direct entry qualification by Academic Achievement

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	1092.083	2	546.041	8.671	.000	Significant
Within Groups	9509.177	151	62.975			
Total	10601.260	153				

α =.05

Table 3 above shows an F value of 8.671 and a P value of .000 testing at an alpha level of .05 the p-value is less than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis states that "There is no significant difference in the mean score of direct entry students admitted into the University of Benin with JUPEB, NCE and OND qualifications in 300 level faculty courses examination of 2019/2020 academic session" is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant difference in the mean score of direct entry students admitted into the University of Benin with JUPEB, NCE and OND qualifications in 300 level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session.

Table 4: Least Significant Difference LSD Multiple Comparisons of Direct entry Qualification by Academic achievement

	(I)QUALIFICATION	(J) QUALIFICATION	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
LSD	JUPEB	NCE	-6.122*	1.542	.000
		OND	-4.744	2.622	.072
	NCE	JUPEB	6.122*	1.542	.000
		OND	1.379	2.845	.629
	OND	JUPEB	4.744	2.622	.072
		NCE	-1.379	2.845	.629

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 above shows the mean difference between the achievement of NCE and OND as 2.845 and a p-value of .629; between JUPEB and OND as -4.744 and a p-value of .072. Testing at an alpha level of 0.05. These comparisons are not significantly different since the p-values are greater than .05. However, the table shows a mean difference between JUPEB and NCE as -6.122 and a p-level of .000 since the p-value is less than .05, there is a significant difference between JUPEB, NCE and OND direct entry qualification.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female direct entry students in 300 level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session.

Table 5: Independent t-test of difference in Academic Achievement by Sex

	SEX	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Average score	MALE	46	48.29	9.854	-1.576	.117	Not significant
	FEMALE	108	50.59	7.526			

Table 5 above shows a t-value of -1.576 and a p-value of .117. Testing at an alpha level of 0.05. The p-value is greater than the alpha value hence the null hypothesis that says "There is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female direct entry students in 300 level faculty courses examination of 2019/2020 academic session" is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean score of male and female direct entry students in 300 level faculty courses examination of the 2019/2020 academic session.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study revealed a statistically significant difference in the mean achievement of JUPEB, NCE and OND students with the NCE students outperforming their JUPEB and OND counterparts. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Olaoluniyi et al (2013) whose study indicated that students with NCE certificates performed better than all their other counterparts in the faculty of education. This, he opined, is based on their three years of educational experiences in the field of education. This study is also in line with the findings of Adeyemi (2009) and Akinoso et al (2016) who opined that NCE students have a more relevant knowledge base on which their university academic experiences are built. NCE students especially in the Faculty of Education have a strong foundation on their relevant courses enriched by their college of education programme. This gives them an edge when they get into the university and so could make them perform better than their UTME or OND counterparts.

The findings of this study are however in discord with the findings of Kpolovie et al (2014) whose findings stated that students who did a one-year preliminary programme performed better than their counterparts. He opined that this may be due to their familiarization with the environment, standards and processes of the university they are admitted to while those admitted through the NCE and OND do not have the opportunity to be acquainted with the university in the same way. The divergent results from the present study may be attributed to some reasons: while the previous study used university graduates' CGPAs, the present one used undergraduates' results. Also, Kpolovie et al (2014) conducted their studies using various faculties in the university including the Faculty of Engineering, Humanities, Agricultural Sciences, Social Sciences and Health Sciences administration students while the present work was conducted using the Faculty of Education undergraduates.

The study also shows that the academic achievement of Direct Entry students did not significantly differ based on their sex. This finding agrees with that of Akinade (2010) and Levin (2011) who found that the academic performance of male and female students does not have any statistically significant difference. However, this finding disagrees with the findings of Abimbola (2015) and Akinoso et al (2016) whose study showed female students

outperforming their respective male counterparts. This disparity might be because the previous study focused only on architecture students, while the current study is focused on students in the faculty of education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the study it was concluded that students' academic achievement differs on the basis of their entry qualifications in the faculty of education, the university of Benin and the NCE students outperform their Direct Entry counterparts.

Another conclusion emanating from this study is that there is no statistically significant difference in the performance of female direct-entry education students in comparison to their male counterparts. This study is not conclusive and as such, the need for more studies to identify the real factors affecting academic achievement of direct-entry education students cannot be over-emphasised, considering the pivotal role it plays in the training of teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The JUPEB Programme and NCE and OND ratio for admission of students into bachelor degree programmes should be reviewed upwards in favour of the NCE Qualification.

2. Students from JUPEB and OND entry qualifications need guidance and monitoring to guarantee better academic performance. A special bridging program can be conducted for all new students to improve their performance.

3. Male and female students should not be taught or admitted with any preconceived disparity between them.

4. In the admission of students into degree programmes in the Faculty of Education, priority and more opportunity should be given to candidates who passed possess the NCE qualification than those who possess OND qualification or JUPEB students.

5. The current admission policy should also be reviewed in favour of students with NCE qualifications.

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