Analysis of West African Examination Council and National Examination Council Performance of Senior Secondary School Students Opting Universities Admission in North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study attempted to analyze the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) examination performance of Senior Secondary School Students opting universities admission in North Central Nigeria. Six research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide and direct the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised all year one students who have successfully written and passed WAEC/NECO examination and secured admission into the Faculty of Education of the Universities in the North Central Nigeria during the 2018/2019 academic session. The statistical analysis was carried out on a random sampling of 292 students from all the schools in the study area. Information required for analysis was obtained through the administration of questionnaire to answer the research questions and conduct of English Test and thereafter applied inferential statistics: t-Test, correlation and ANOVA at > 0.05 level of significance. The instrument used was duly validated with reliability coefficient of 0.626. The result showed among others that there is no glaring difference in performance of the students in WAEC and NECO examination, (Mean = 2.6076/2.5867), WAEC / NECO have no significant different with regards to students performance $F(2.200) = .702, P= .497(>0.05)$. It was recommended among others that tertiary institutions should be mandated to desist from discriminating against NECO in respect of students' admission.
KEYWORDS: Examination, Performance, Admission, Students

I.   INTRODUCTION

Examination is of paramount importance in any educational institution. It is one of the most reliable means of evaluating learners' academic performance in institutions of learning. Hornby (1995) in Ojerinde (2005) defines it as a formal test of a person knowledge or proficiency in a subject or skill. In Nigeria, over the years the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) have been the two major examination bodies responsible for end of secondary school programme evaluation and the results from the two examination bodies are required for entrance into tertiary institutions such as Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education among others.

According to Aguba (2009) the West African Examination Council (WAEC) was set up in 1951 through an ordinance No. 40 of 1951 in Accra as agreed upon by the legislative Assembly of Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. The council became operative in 1952. The first examination conducted in Ghana and Nigeria was in 1953 and 1954 respectively. The ordinance which established the council among other things charged it with the responsibility of determining the examination requirement in West Africa and empowered it to conduct such examinations and award certificates provided that the certificates so awarded do not repress a lower standard of attainment than equivalent certificates of examination authorities in the United Kingdom.

The National Examination Council (NECO) on the other hand was established in Nigeria in April, 1999 by decree 33 which later became an act of the parliament in 2002. NECO was to take over the responsibilities and duties of the National Board of Educational Measurement (NBEM). Before this time, all Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) had been an exclusive responsibility of the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC). However, this responsibility was also added to NECO, which was saddled with the responsibility of conducting transitory examination which would help in determining the suitability of students for the next level of his/her educational career.

It has become a thing of concern that many students see NECO examination as an examination written to fulfill all righteousness. According to Adeogun (2002), one of the goals, aims and objectives of educational agencies is to develop, assess and improve educational programmes at various levels. Although NECO being one of these agencies had not failed in any of these responsibilities yet WAEC seems to be more prestigious.

It is on the basis of the above background that this study attempts to find out whether there exist any difference in the performance of students in the two examination and whether this influence their admission and performance at the university of admission in North Central Nigeria. The study also attempts to determine the influence of gender, location, teachers' influence, as well as availability and coverage of content of syllabus on the academic performance of students.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The discrepancy between WAEC and NECO examinations has posed a lot of problem among students opting admission in universities. Observation has shown that many students prefer writing WAEC to NECO because they feel that WAEC result seems to be more superior and acceptable than NECO. In some universities, students with WAEC results are given preferential treatment in respect of admission of students which has further belittled NECO examination in most tertiary institutions. This problem is so serious that most parents prefer their children to write WAEC only at the expense of NECO examination which is supposed to be the most recognized O level examination in the country. Most parents, stakeholders, and school administrators fault the credibility and authenticity of NECO examination in Nigeria. Furthermore, it is disturbing to say that our students who seek admission abroad with NECO results are being denied.

Government on its own part has tried in terms of provision of adequate facilities, competent personnel and relevant syllabus, in order to improve students' performances. In spite of all these efforts, there is lingering discrepancy between the two able examinations bodies. The problem of this study therefore, is: what is the analysis of students' performances in the university vis a vis their WAEC and or NECO performances in North-Central Nigeria.

III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

Ho₁ There is no significant difference in WAEC/NECO performance of students opting for university admission in North-Central Universities.

Ho₂ There is no significant difference in performance in O level English test between Male and Female students opting for admission in North-Central Universities

Ho₃ There is no significant relationship between English grades obtained by students in WAEC/NECO and grades obtained in the O'level English test

Ho₄ There is no significant influence of location on students' performance in O'Level English test for students opting for admission in North Central universities.

Ho₅ There is no significant difference in the perceived responses of students on teachers influence on students' performance in WAEC/NECO among states

Ho₆ There is no significant difference in the perceived responses of students on the availability and utilization of syllabuses for the conduct of WAEC and NECO examinations

3.1 Concept and Importance of Examinations

Examination is the pivotal point around which the whole system of education revolves and the success/failure of the system of examination is indeed an indication of the success/failure of a particular system of education (Wilayat, 2009). Hornby (1995) in Ojerinde (2005) defines examination as "a formal test of somebody's knowledge or ability in a particular subject, especially by means of written questions or practical exercise". Oparaku (2005) argues that the main purpose of examination is to ascertain the abilities and competencies of the students. He maintained that examination has a central position in our educational system. It is organised to evaluate the cumulative or broad knowledge in a student's educational development.

3.2 Students Academic Performance in external Examinations

Education remains the bedrock of development but, in Nigeria, there is consensus about the falling educational standards (Adesehinwa, 2007, cited in Akinsolu, 2010). The poor performance of secondary school students in different subjects as observed in the yearly results of Senior School Certificate Examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO justifies the claim of dwindling academic performance of secondary school students in both internal and external examinations (Ajayi, Hasstrup & Osalusi, 2010).The poor quality of manpower and the negative implication of this on students performance makes the issue of learning environment and academic performance a concern (Aremu, 2000 cited in Unanma, Abugu, Dike & Umeobika, 2013). More

so, secondary schools are important because tertiary institution draws their students from it. Thus, the essence of secondary education is to lay the foundation for further study at a higher level.

However, Obemeata (1995) as cited in Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011) pathetically observe that about 93% of secondary school leavers in any given year do not qualify to gain admissions into higher institutions especially university. This is because, according to Sam (2011) cited in Olorundare (2011), there is a below average performance of thousands of students in examinations conducted by NECO and WAEC where only 20% of the candidates pass at acceptable credit level.

Studies have pointed to various factors as having predominant impact on the performance of students in external examinations. For instance, Akinsolu (2010) is of the view that teachers are the main determinants of academic performance. Other factors according to Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011), Unanma, Abugu, Dike and Umeobika (2013), Akinsolu (2010), Komba, Hizza & Winledy (2013) include student/ teacher ratio, the commitment of teachers, learning environment, student classroom attendance, parents and teachers communication, availability of well-equipped libraries and laboratories, parental influence on children and family environment, leadership of the principal, teachers adequacy and competency as well as parental education.

3.3 Influence of WAEC and NECO Syllabus on Students Academic Performance

Scholars like Shikuku (2012) studied the effect of syllabus coverage on students' performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (KCSEE) between 2003 and 2007. The study result showed that coverage of syllabus has a significant effect on students' academic performance. This implies that schools that cover the syllabus 100% performed better than those that did not cover the syllabus fully. Amadalo, Shikuku and Wasike (2012) also found a positive relationship between coverage of syllabus and students' performance in national examinations. Hence, WAEC (2009) noted that examination syllabuses are not properly covered before examinations in some cases. It maintained that some candidates, and perhaps their teachers, limit their preparation for WASSCE to some sections of the syllabus and that candidates who do not cover the syllabus properly may not answer all the required questions to pass their WASSCE. Uwadiae (2000) also observes that students are poorly equipped academically by their schools to create the desired confidence to face public examinations. Uduh (2010), equally identified students' inadequate preparation, poor coverage of the syllabus, failure to adhere to rubrics, lack of understanding of the demands of the questions, illegible hand writing and spelling mistakes, shallow knowledge of subject matter, incorrect interpretation of questions, poor knowledge of examination techniques, test anxiety and examination malpractices as causes of candidates' poor performance in senior school certificate examination

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive (survey) research design was used to analyse the WAEC and NECO performance of secondary school students who opted for university admission in North Central Nigeria. This method is most preferable because it helps to collect data in large scale from wide population in order to enable generalization to be made about given factors or variables.

Population of the Study consist of all year one students who have successfully written and passed WAEC/NECO and secured admission into Faculties of Education of the Universities in the North Central Nigeria in the 2018/2019 academic session.

A total of two hundred and ninety two (292) 100 level students who were admitted into the Faculty of Education in the three (3) randomly selected Universities in the North-Central zone constitute the sample for this study. These students had earlier written WAEC and NECO examination and passed at credit level.

The researchers adopted a multi-stage sample technique in selecting the sample. Simple random sampling was used to select the three states in the North-Central zone. Purposive sampling method was employed to draw the three (3) Universities which offer Bachelor Degree in Education. One University was selected from each state. They are Ibrahim Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State; Benue State University Markudi and Kogi State University, Anyigba.

Two instruments were used for data collection:

1.   A test instrument of 20 items multiple choice questions designed in English language to determine the performance of students in the test vis-à-vis their performance in WAEC/NECO.

2.   A 10 item questionnaire designed by the researchers to collect information from students on their perceive influence of teachers and WAEC/NECO syllabus on their performance. The tests questions were constructed by expert in English language department.

Validity of the Instrument

The construct validity was analyzed using factor analysis of the questionnaire after face validation was done by experts in Measurement and Evaluation department. In other to deduce whether a questionnaire

construct is effective, factorial analysis was used. In this study, the communalities extraction for 10 items ranged from **0.640 to 0.838.** Apart from items 2 and 3 which had validity of .581 and .567and were modified prior to the main research .This implies that the items of the questionnaire were well constructed.

To check for internal consistency of the items, a reliability analysis was carried out on the proposed questionnaire items with four (4) point Likert structure values scale comprising 10 items. Cronbach's alpha statistics yielded **.627. W**ith Cronbach's alpha statistic, a greater relationship indicates a high reliability of an instrument. Cronbach's alpha rate must exceed 0.60 to be accepted as unidimensional (Pallant, 2011). For this study the items instrument were found to have an internal consistency of **62.7%.** Most items appeared to be worthy of retention, resulting in a decrease in the alpha if deleted by Inter-Item Correlation Matrix.

Data for this study was collected by the researchers in conjunction with two research assistants who are also lecturers in each of the three Universities in question. These research assistant administered and retrieved both the questionnaire and English test.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data for this study was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using the (SPSS statistical package IBM version 23.0). As for the descriptive statistics, frequencies/percentages were used to compare the means while for the inferential statistics, t-test, correlation, co-efficient and analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance was adopted

Ho$_1$: There is no significant difference in the performance of students in WAEC and NECO opting for university admission in North-Central Universities

Table 5.1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for differences in performance

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Grade in English	Between Groups	.626	2	.313	.702	.497
	Within Groups	89.226	200	.446		
	Total	89.852	202			
English Test grade	Between Groups	.465	2	.232	.627	.535
	Within Groups	80.422	217	.371		
	Total	80.886	219			

From table 5.1 the results of the English test grades and the grades obtained in WAEC and NECO was tested using one way analysis of variance to check whether there exist a difference in the performance of students that wrote WAEC and NECO. It can be seen that ANOVA yielded

F(2, 200) = .702, p = .497(>0.05). This is not significant. Hence, we retain the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the performance of students who wrote WAEC and NECO or both, opting for admission in North-Central Universities. The educational implication is that the performance of students in the two examination bodies does not differ significantly and that the English examination is of approximate standard for both bodies.

Ho$_2$: There is no significant difference in the performance of Male and Female students opting for admission in North-Central Universities

To test this hypothesis, independent samples t-test was used. Results obtained are presented in table 5.2

Table 5.2. Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Test Score Equal variances assumed	1.675	.197	.503	290	.615	.92624	1.84139	-2.69794	4.55042
Equal variances not assumed			.503	289.672	.615	.92624	1.83984	-2.69491	4.54739

From table 5.2, the results of independent sample t-Test yielded $t_{290} = 0.503, p = .615$ (> .05) which is not significant. This implies that there was no significant difference in the means scores of Male and Female students in the test. Hence, we retain the null hypothesis as there exist no strong statistical evidence that there are differences by gender in the performance of students in the O'level English Test.

Ho₃ : There is no significant relationship between English grades obtained by students in WAEC/NECO and grades obtained in the O'level English test

To test this hypothesis, the bivariate Pearson Product Moment correlation was used since we intend to determine relationship between the two pairs. The analysed results are presented in table 5.3

Table 5.3: Correlations of English grades in WAEC/NECO and O'level English Test

		Grade in English	English Test grade
Grade in English	Pearson Correlation	1	.356**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	203	152
English Test grade	Pearson Correlation	.356**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	152	220

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To test for the above, PPMC statistics was used. In table 4.7, the Pearson correlation Coefficient between the two yielded $r = .356, p = .000 (< 0.01)$. There exist a low positive correlation between Students grades in WAEC/NECO English examinations and the O'level English test which is significant, hence we reject the null hypothesis as there exist a statistical evidence of a relationship between the two pairs.

Ho₄ : There is no significant influence of location on students' performance in O'Level English test for students opting for admission in North Central universities.

Table 5.4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for differences in performance by location

Test Score

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	26.533	2	13.267	.053	.948
Within Groups	71803.946	289	248.457		
Total	71830.479	291			

To test hypothesis 4, students O'level English test scores were used. Variability in scores obtained was checked across the three states (location). To test variability of their test scores Analysis of variance was used @0.05 level of significant. The result yielded **F(2, 289)=.053, p=.948 (>.05).** This implies that there is no significant influence of location on student's performance in the O'level English test. Hence, we retain the hypothesis that "There is no significant influence of location on students' performance in O'Level English test for students opting for admission in North Central universities."

Ho₅ : There is no significant difference in the perceived responses of students on teachers influence on student's performance in WAEC/NECO among states

Table 5.5. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for teachers influence on students performance in WAEC/NECO

Teachers Influence

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.475	2	.238	.984	.375
Within Groups	69.767	289	.241		
Total	70.242	291			

To test the hypothesis 5, items 1-6 of the questionnaire were transformed into one item as these items measure teachers influence on the performance of students in WAEC/NECO. The variability in the responses of students was checked across the three states (location). To test variability of their responses, Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used @0.05 level of significant. The result yielded **F(2, 289)=.984, p=.375 (>.05)** which is not significant, hence we retain the null hypothesis. This implies that perception of the respondents on the influence of teachers across the state is the same. The respondent was on the view that teachers have great influence on the performance of student in WAEC and NECO.

Ho₆ : There is no significant difference in the perceived responses of students on the availability and utilization of syllabuses for the conduct of WAEC and NECO examinations

Table 5.6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for syllabus availability and utilization by student prior to WAEC/NECO

Syllabus Influence

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.601	2	.301	.890	.412
Within Groups	97.641	289	.338		
Total	98.242	291			

To test the hypothesis 6, items 7-10 of the questionnaire were transformed into one item as these items measure availability and utilization of syllabus prior to WAEC and NECO examinations. The variability in the responses of students were investigated across the three states (locations) which was tested. To test variability of their responses, Analysis of variance(ANOVA) was use @0.05 level of significant. The result yielded **F(2, 289)=.890, p=.412 (>.05),** which is not significant, hence we retain the null hypothesis. This implies that perception of the respondents on the availability and utilization of syllabuses prior to WAEC and NECO across the states is the same. The respondents across the states were of the view that syllabuses were available and well utilized by teachers and students as well as the examination bodies in the conduct of their examinations

VI.   SUMMARY

The main purpose of this study is to analyse WAEC and NECO Examination performance of Senior Secondary School Students Opting Universities Admission in North Central Nigeria. In order to accomplish this, six hypotheses were formulated based on the research questions raised to guide or direct the study. Relevant literatures based on these variables were reviewed to support the study. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised students opting Universities Admission in Niger, Benue and Kogi. Respondents were selected using multiple stages sampling and proportionate random sampling technique. A structured Questionnaire and O'Level English Test was used to collect the data for the study. The Questionnaire was duly validated with Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.627. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data to answer the research questions while the inferential statistics: t-Test, correlation and ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. The findings revealed among others that:

1.   WAEC/NECO have no significant difference with regards to students performance **F(2, 200) = .702, *p* = .497(>0.05).** This is a clear indication that both WAEC/NECO produces students of equal academic standard of performance. Hence discrimination against NECO by students, parents and institution of higher learning is not justified.

2.   There was no significant difference in the means scores of Male and Female students in the test $t_{290} = 0.503, p = .615 \,(> .05)$

3.   There exist a low positive correlation between students grades in WAEC/NECO English examinations and the O'level English test which is significant $r = .356, p = .000 (< 0.01)$

4.   There is no significant influence of location on student's performance in the O'level English test **F(2, 289)=.053, p=.948 (>.05).**

5.   Teachers have great influence on the performance of student in WAEC and NECO **F(2, 289)=.984, p=.375 (>.05)**.

6.   Syllabuses were available and well utilized by teachers and students as well as the examination bodies in the conduct of their examinations **F(2, 289)=.890, p=.412 (>.05**

VII.   CONCLUSION

This study essentially analyses the performance of students in WAEC/NECO vis a vis their performance at the various universities of admission in North Central Nigeria. The essence of the study was to determine whether there exists significant difference in performance of the students with regards to the different categories of examination. The study revealed that although influence of teachers, availability and coverage of syllabus contribute significantly to students' academic performance, location and gender did not impact on the students' academic performance. It was concluded that since both examination bodies are of equal standards, there is no justification for the discrimination against NECO in terms of admission.

VIII.   RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Students and parents should accord NECO with full recognition just like WAEC as both examinations produce equal level of performance among students.

Tertiary institutions should be compelled to stop discriminating against NECO in terms of admission of students.

More attention and resources should be channeled towards other forms of admission, like Direct Entry (DE), Pre-Degree Science (PDS), University Advance Basic Studies (UABS) and Joint University Preliminary Examination Board (JUPEB).

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