



Historical Evaluation of JAMB and its Efficiency in Educational Development in
Nigeria, 1978-2019

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Abstract

The establishment of tertiary institutions in Nigeria necessitated the setting up of entrance examinations into these schools. This becomes more understandable if one considers the teeming population of youths seeking admission into these tertiary institutions. Hitherto, each institution used to conduct entrance examinations in line with their autonomous status. This process was called concessional admission. It was in 1978 that the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) to harmonize admissions into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This paper undertook a historical evaluation of JAMB's efficiency in the conduct of entrance examinations in Nigeria, 1978-2019. Historical descriptive design was adopted. Fifteen staff, applicants and students were sampled from fifteen tertiary institutions and their host communities in South Western geo-political zone of Nigeria. A structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Historical Evaluation of JAMB Efficiency in the Conduct of Entrance Examinations in Nigeria" (QHEJECEEN) was used. The data obtained were analyzed using ANOVA as the statistical tool. It was revealed that examination malpractices remain a formidable task before JAMB. In view of the foregoing, it was recommended that the nation should urgently come to the rescue of JAMB to curb examination malpractices.

Keywords: Efficiency, examination, evaluation, admission, tertiary institutions.

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Introduction

Examination is a word that embellishes a lot of steps in one's quest for knowledge or information. It has to do with questions, tests, assessments, evaluations, inquiries and so on. It is in line with the foregoing that the first examination in the world could be traced to the first five questions in the Bible. The first was between Satan and the woman, and the last four were between God on the one hand and the couple Adam and Eve on the other. However, the first known examination in the world of human beings could be traced to 1796 when Maskelyne, not only observed but also recorded with the aid of telescope, the movement of stars in England (Agbama, 2019). Studying differences in equations and observations among human beings, Bessel, a German Astronomer, in the years 1820-1833, improved on the works began by Maskelyne. However, it was not until 1884 that tests and measurements of individuals started with the discovery of Sir Francis Galton in his laboratories (Agbama, 2019). The point must, however, be made that these early examinations were informal, oral and written as the case might be.

The Chinese were said to have been the first people to have applied informal examinations in written form in appointments into their civil service as early as 2200 B.C. Before 1815, the Americans were believed to have employed the use of series of achievement tests in their educational and civil service systems (Agbama, 2019). A test called the Beriet Simon intelligence test was targeted at measuring the intelligence of children while group test was first introduced in the years 1914-1918 to test the intelligence of soldiers (Agbama, 2019). Objective tests were developed in 1864 by George Fisher and in 1877, J.M. Rice introduced what has been known as the standard objective scale (Agbama, 2019).

It is quite logical to argue that the first formal examination known in Nigeria, without fear of self-contradictions; came *parri passu*, with the advent of western education. This perspective is more tenable if one considers the fact that transition from one level to another would have required a decision as to whether the pupils had satisfied all the requirements for promotion or not. Such a decision would naturally come after a form of test, measurement, evaluation and or examination in the spirit of fair play. However, the first known examination body in Nigeria is the West African Examination Council (WAEC) which had first been established in the Gambia in 1951 and in 1952 its office was opened in Nigeria. (Agbama, 2019) opined that, *inter-alia*, WAEC conducts examinations like the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE), General Certificate Examination (GCE), City and Guilds and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Examination.

Other examination bodies in Nigeria include the National Examination Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB), the International Centre for Educational Evaluation (ICEE) and JAMB. Before going further, the point must be

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made that all the other examination bodies aforementioned including WAEC, but excluding JAMB were so established to conduct terminal examinations in secondary and specialized schools particularly with a view to preparing students for tertiary institutions. It was only JAMB that was founded to conduct entrance examinations into Universities in Nigeria and it is in this light that this paper discusses the history of JAMB.

The years 1948, when the University College, Ibadan, was established; and 1978, when JAMB was established, witnessed a period when universities in Nigeria were allowed to control their admission without recourse to any external examination body (Anyawu, 2016). The years following the civil war brought new developments into the educational landscape of Nigeria. The Gowon regime wanted to use education as a tool for national re-birth and reconciliation. The point must be reiterated were that during the civil war, educational activities, in most cases were disrupted or actually paralyzed particularly in Eastern Nigeria. The population of the country was rapidly increasing especially in post-civil war Nigeria and the teeming population of Nigerian youths were becoming increasingly ambitious and were vigorously pursuing university education especially in the South. Coupled with the foregoing is also the fact that the nation needed skilled manpower to harness and articulate the rehabilitation programmes of the Federal Government and so university education became highly sought after.

This period, however, coincided with a time when the existing universities could no longer satisfy the yearnings of youths seeking admission. This was occasioned by lack of facilities like classrooms, hostels, laboratories and personnel which concomitantly constrained the universities to limit the numbers of students admitted annually. Anyawu (2016) submitted that this period of low admission also saw a period of imbalance in admission where the North continued to protest against the number of intakes *vis-à-vis* the South. Since each university was conducting its admission on its own, another problem of multiple admission consequently arose. This was a situation when; because applicants were not sure if they would be offered admission by a particular university, applicants would now apply to different universities and would be offered admission by more than one. In such a situation, candidates so offered admission by different universities would not reject such multiple admissions on time thereby preventing other candidates from being admitted (Anyawu, 2016). Since the South embraced western education earlier than the North, cases of multiple admissions, understandably, were more rampant in the South than the North. It was then argued by the North that the South was deliberately using multiple admissions to deprive its youths from being admitted into universities. Thus this era of cut throat competition and mutual suspicion between the North and South that characterized pre-civil war Nigeria, was being re-awakened. Anyawu (2016) opined that all these culminated in increasing demands for the

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introduction of quota system, establishment of federal universities in all states and the establishment of state universities.

The Federal Government responded to this by removing university education from the Concurrent list to the Exclusive list through the instrumentality of the 1972 Declaration which surreptitiously amended the 1963 Republican Constitution (Anyawu, 2016). The meaning of the foregoing is that only the Federal Government of Nigeria could establish and own universities. University admission and by extension, education became the exclusive responsibility of the federal government alone. Secondly in addition to the existing six universities, the federal government established seven more making the number to be thirteen before 1978. Finally, the federal government set up a committee known as the Committee on University Entrance (CUE) headed by M.S. Angulu to advice government, *inter-alia*, on how to solve issues generated by university admission in Nigeria (Anyawu, 2016). It was this committee that recommended among other things the establishment of the Universities Central Admission Board which metamorphized into JAMB in 1978 (Anyawu, 2016).

Having established the foregoing point, it is quite pertinent to examine the formative years of JAMB's existence with a view to understanding how it has fared in carrying out the mandate given to it. JAMB (2019a) noted that JAMB was established by Decree No. 2 of 1978 as amended by Decree No 33 of 1989. These decrees empowered JAMB, *inter-alia*, to conduct matriculation examinations into all Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. In order to achieve the foregoing mandate JAMB was further empowered to appoint all personnel like examiners, invigilators, moderators and other personnel it considered necessary in the conduct of its examinations. Moreover, JAMB was also enabled by these decrees to admit candidates who have been adjudged to have satisfied all requirements for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria (JAMB, 2019a). JAMB Act (2019b) submitted that the enabling decrees establishing JAMB also defined, among other things, membership of the Board, tenure of office of Board members, removal from office of Board members, ministerial power over the Board, other staff of the Board, fund of the Board, expenditure of the Board.

Ukoba (2017) opined that JAMB prior to 2014, was conducting two different examinations into higher institutions in Nigeria. One was the University Matriculation Examination (UME) and the other was the Monotechnics, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Examinations (MPCE). It was, however, in 2010 that JAMB harmonized the two examinations and so the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) was born. This was apparently done to save cost and time and at the same time, it gave equal opportunities for all candidates seeking admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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Then the paper and pencil test (PPT) was in vogue but now a computer based test (CBT) which is a computer based standardized test had been introduced. The duration of each examination was two hours forty-five minutes with a grade range of 0-400 and a validity period of one year. It must also be observed that JAMB conducted its examinations only once a year.

JAMB (2019c) observed that the introduction of biometric data capture for staff of the Board and candidates seeking admission went a long way to check examination malpractices and also to monitor the movement of staff. Coupled with the foregoing, the Board also went digital with supply of computers to staff. All these culminated in timely release of examinations' results within two weeks instead of within two or three months as was the practice. Lawal (2019) opined that JAMB had been un-remitting in checking examination malpractices in all its centres nationwide. There are laid down rules and procedures to be met by these centres and any contravention attracted stiff penalties; as it was the case in 2019, when JAMB banned one hundred of its centres nationwide for committing various examination offences. JAMB (2019d) noted that one of the many ways by which the Board had been assisting candidates to ease their yearly burden of obtaining admission into higher institutions of their choice was the provision of an online support system known as the Central Online Support System (COSS). This included Candidate/General Support Ticket, Development Partners and Centre Support and Local Support.

To buttress the point that paucity of funds was not one of the many challenges bedeviling JAMB, according to (Nwafor, 2017) whereas between 2010 and 2016, the total amount of money remitted to the federal government by JAMB was 5 million Naira, it rose to 7.8 billion Naira in 2017 alone. That JAMB had, not only adopted technology but had entrenched it is no longer in doubt. Iredia (2019) had noted that the JAMB Registrar, through the use of technology, could know when a candidate registers, the exact time of registration, the system used to register the candidate as well as the exact location of the registration centre. Iredia (2019) added that biometric verification of candidates was a major achievement of the Board which had gone a long way in checking impersonation at examination centres.

In spite of these daunting achievements by JAMB, the task of conducting examinations into all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria with the teeming population of her youths is rather Herculean (Rotimi, 2015). The introduction of U.T.M.E. had made a mockery of the fact that admission requirements into Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are different. By harmonizing matriculation examinations of these institutions

the objectives of the founders of these different institutions had thus been defeated (Rotimi, 2015).

Sylvester (2016) noted that screening of candidates into universities after writing JAMB examinations began when cases of examination malpractices became rampant. In order to further examine candidates before being admitted, institutions now introduced screening tests for candidates and this is now known as post U.T.M.E. The foregoing is further buttressed by the point that a correlation had not been made between higher JAMB scores and better performance of students during their 100 level, whereas a correlation was established between higher Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) scores and students performance in higher schools (Lawal, 2016). The minimum cut off marks for admissions into Universities, Polytechnics Colleges of Education range between 100 -160 (Bamigbola, 2019). The implication of the foregoing is that any candidate who secured admission into any higher institution in Nigeria with 100 marks or 25% of the total marks obtainable or 160 marks or 40% had actually performed below average (Rotimi, 2015). Most institutions, whether public or private, now admit students who had performed dismally in entrance examinations.

Statement of the Problems

Multiple admissions had deprived many Nigerian youths admission into higher institutions and the North was mostly affected. In order to solve this problem the Federal Government of Nigeria established JAMB to conduct matriculation examinations into tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

JAMB had been the sole body conducting entrance examinations into higher institutions in Nigeria since 1978. However, there are constraints on the performance of this task as there are many higher institutions in Nigeria and given the sheer size of the nation's population of admission seekers every year. Coupled with the foregoing is the fact that standards are being lowered yearly as a progressive reduction in cut-off marks was observed. This paper, therefore, evaluates the history and efficiency of JAMB in conducting matriculation examinations into higher institutions in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant difference between efficiency of JAMB and admission of candidates with low grades.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the efficiency of JAMB and post U.T.M.E.

Methodology

Historical descriptive survey research design was used which necessitated a structured questionnaire. The title of the structured questionnaire is “QHEJECEEN”. Sampled respondents were selected with descriptive sampling technique. Fifteen staff, applicants and students were sampled from fifteen higher institutions and their host communities in South-Western Nigeria making a total of 225 respondents. A ten item questionnaire was designed on the subject. The questionnaire is close - ended which included Yes or No options. The data collected was analyzed with ANOVA as the statistical tool. “QHEJECEEN” was validated by two Principal Lecturers of the School of Secondary Education (Arts and Social Sciences) of The College of Education, Lanlate and two Senior Lecturers of the Department of History, University of Ibadan. T-test was also used to test internal validity and the reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was established which was reliable enough to carry out the research.

Discussion of Results

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the efficiency of JAMB and the admission of students with low grades.

The first hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between the efficiency of JAMB and the admission of students with low grades is rejected as shown on Tables 1 and 2 . The implication of the rejection of this null hypothesis is that if JAMB is truly efficient, admission of students with low grades would not have been allowed in the first instance as this would ultimately affect students’ performance when eventually admitted.

Table 1: Efficiency of JAMB and the Admission of Students with Low Grades.

EFFICIENCY OF JAMB		ADMISSION OF STUDENTS WITH GRADES		TOTAL
		YES (%)	NO (%)	
Q1	Is there any significant difference between effectiveness of U.T.M.E. and admission of students with low grades?	139 (62)	86 (38.22)	225
Q2	Is there any relationship between effective supervision of U.T.M.E. and admission of students with low grades?	141 (62.67)	84 (37.33)	225
Q3	Do you agree that JAMB's prompt release of results has anything to do with admission of students with low grades?	99 (44)	126 (56)	225
Q4	Do you agree that the establishment of JAMB has a relationship with inadequacies of concessional admission?	176 (78.22)	49 (21.78)	225
Q5	Is there any relationship between the harmonization of tertiary matriculation examination and admission of students with low grades?	162 (72)	63 (28)	225

TABLE 2: ANOVA Results of Table 1

Source	ss	Df	ms	F	f. critical	p-value	Decision
Between	9548.1	1	9548.1	11216	5.3177	0.0101	Reject
Within	6910.4	8	851.3				
Total	16458.5	9					

This is an agreement with (Rotimi, 2015) when it was asserted that tertiary institutions in Nigeria admit candidates with as low as between 25% and 40% of the total marks obtainable in matriculation examinations conducted by JAMB. It then means that students being admitted into higher institutions in Nigeria are below average.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between efficiency of JAMB and post-U.T.M.E.

Table 2: Efficiency of JAMB and Post-U.T.M.E.

EFFICIENCY OF JAMB		POST U. T. M. E.		TOTAL
		YES%	NO%	
Q1	Is there any correlation between effectiveness of JAMB and the establishment of post U.T.M.E.?	147 (65.33)	78 (34.67)	225
Q2	Is there any relationship between supervision of matriculation examinations and establishment of post U.T.M.E.?	182 (80.89)	43 (19.11)	225
Q3	Is there any relationship between JAMB's timely release of results and post U.T.M.E.?	161 (71.56)	64 (28.44)	225
Q4	Is there any relationship between concessional admission and post U.T.M.E.?	133 (59.11)	92 (40.89)	225
Q5	Do you agree that there is a correlation between the harmonization of tertiary matriculation examination and post U.T.M.E.?	205 (91.11)	20 (8.89)	225

TABLE 2: ANOVA Results of Table 2

SOURCE	ss	df	ms	F	f.critical	p-value	decision
BETWEEN	27984.1	1	27984.1	34.023	5.3177	0.0004	Reject
WITHIN	6580	8	8225.1				
TOTAL	34564.1	9					

The second null hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between efficiency of JAMB and the introduction of post U.T.M.E. in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is rejected as shown on Table 1 as well as ANOVA in Table 2. What the foregoing means is that if JAMB is really efficient in carrying out its mandate, there would not have been any need for higher institutions to conduct separate screening of candidates seeking admission as epitomized in the post U.T.M.E. Failure of JAMB in addressing lapses in the admission processes, therefore, led to post U.T.M.E.

This is in tandem with the assertion of (Sylvester, 2016) that higher institutions in Nigeria began to conduct post U.T.M.E. when the conduct of matriculation examinations by JAMB became riddled with malpractices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A historical evaluation of JAMB and its efficiency in the educational development of Nigeria was carried out and the study covered the years between 1978, when the Board was established and 2019, the current year. Looking at the events surrounding the establishment of JAMB, one would readily agree that the Federal Government of Nigeria then had almost no option other than to set up the Board. There was heat in the body politic and the palpable tension generated by multiple admissions pitched the North against the South. This period coincided with the period of North/South dichotomy and government wanted the problem solved once and for all hence the establishment of JAMB.

Admittedly with the establishment of JAMB and harmonization of admission processes, the hue and cry generated hitherto were doused albeit temporarily. The establishment of more universities, especially in Northern Nigeria, also contributed in no small measure to allay the fears of domination of the North by the South educationally.

JAMB had done a lot in conducting matriculation examinations into higher institutions in Nigeria. Not only had it digitalized its operations, it had also pleasantly surprised Nigerians by releasing its results within the shortest possible time. The Board had also shown serious commitment towards checking examination malpractices by descending heavily on perpetrators of such dastardly acts. All these were efforts aimed at lending credibility to its examinations.

However, higher institutions had shown that Jamb was not efficient in carrying out its mandate by introducing the post U.T.M.E. The post U.T.M.E., therefore, is a tacit rejection of JAMB's matriculation examinations which is akin to a vote of no confidence.

Interestingly enough; the North that had inadvertently contributed immensely to the establishment of JAMB with the belief that universities were discriminating against northern candidates, still, up till now, do not have as many students in universities as the south does. This is better understood when one considers the fact that the quota system, when introduced, was principally aimed at providing admission opportunities for applicants from the less privileged areas especially the North. Anyawu (2016) submitted that in 1978/79 academic session, for instance, a total of 113, 162 candidates applied to different universities in Nigeria. Out of this figure, applicants from the North were less than 20,000. Of the total number that applied for admission, only 14,417 students or 12% were admitted altogether with the South having 11,641 and the North having 2,776. Unfortunately the trend continues till today.

It is in view of all the foregoing that the paper recommended that JAMB, as presently constituted, should be un-bundled and de-centralized. Nigeria is a large country both in terms of land mass and population with her youths seeking admission contributing a big chunk of the nation's population. For a single body to effectively carry out the responsibility of conducting matriculation examinations for all the tertiary institutions in the whole country is rather herculean indeed.

Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation and there is no gainsaying the fact that higher institutions were founded, *inter-alia*, to stimulate the growth and development of their host communities. If the input of individual institutions is not factorized in admission processes, it would affect the quality of intakes and thus compromise the aims and objectives of the founding fathers in establishing such an institution. It is thus suggested that each institution should be allowed a large measure of autonomy in its admission processes.

In recent years, the Federal Government had been taking steps to stop tertiary institutions from conducting post U.T.M.E., although it has not been implemented with the political will it deserves. Instead of doing this government should empower tertiary institutions in the conduct of local matriculation examinations.

JAMB should also take urgent steps to reinvigorate credibility and integrity in its examinations by checkmating examination malpractices. It is quite evident that giant strides have been made in this direction. The ban placed on 100 CBT centres, discussed elsewhere in this paper, is a good case in point. However, more could still be done in this direction and all stakeholders in the education sector should come to the assistance of the Board to solve this multi-faceted problem not only of JAMB but of the whole nation as a whole.

Government is apparently in a dilemma amidst calls for the un-bundling of JAMB. The reason is not far-fetched as the body language of the North does not favour such a dramatic step. The apprehension is quite understandable in view of the yawning gap between the North and the South in the area of population of youths in higher institutions of learning. This problem could be solved from the primary and secondary schools levels. The preponderance of out of school children is higher in the North *vis-à-vis* the South. If the gap would be bridged at the top, the best place to start is from the lower levels.

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