

Do They End at the Same Point?

Odusola Olutoyin Dibu-Ojerinde¹ and Bamidele Abiodun Faleye²

*1. Department of Special Education and Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*

E-mail: <odusolaolutoyin@yahoo.com> <odibuoje@oauife.edu.ng>

*2. Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling, Faculty of Education,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*

E-mail: delewolu@yahoo.com.au

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ABSTRACT The Senior School Certificate (SSC) obtained at the end of the third year of Senior Secondary Schooling (or its equivalents) in addition to performance result in the Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) qualifies one for admission into 100 level in any Nigerian University. Both the National Examinations Council (NECO) and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) are conducting the Senior School Certificate Examination. This study sought to find out whether there existed any significant difference in the performance of students admitted through NECO SSC and those admitted through WAEC SSC. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in the performance of the two groups ($t [df = 38] = 0.1; p > 0.05$ for the first semester; $t [df = 38] = 0.1; p > 0.05$ for the second semester). It could not also be established that holders of one version are superior to the others in terms of first year undergraduate performance (Mean GPA[WAEC] = 2.66, Mean GPA[NECO] = 2.64, $t = 1.03$ for first semester and Mean GPA[WAEC] = 2.68, Mean GPA[NECO] = 2.70, $t = 0.97$ for second semester).

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, an applicant into the University could be admitted in either of two ways: the first is by writing an entrance examination (into 100 level) called Universities Matriculation Examination (UME) and the second, by Direct Entry (DE) to 200 level. Those to be admitted through the former are essentially holders of the Senior School Certificate (SSC) or its equivalents while those seeking DE admission are those with Advanced Level (AL) certificates and their equivalent.

The SSC is been conducted in Nigeria by two examination bodies – the National Examinations Council (NECO) and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). Students admitted by each of the two versions of SSC are assumed to possess similar academic strength needed for undergraduate activities. In the recent past, some calls have been made (e.g. Ejinkeonye, 2004) for the scrapping of NECO for fear that the SSC it issues is not as valid as that of WAEC. Ejinkeonye submitted that a large proportion (40%) of candidates' final outcome in each of the subjects at the NECO Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) was made up of school-based/teacher assessment scores. This assertion (even if true) may not be a minus to the credibility of NECO Certificate because the National Policy

on Education (NPE, 1977 rev. 1998) states that:

“Educational assessment and evaluation will be liberalised by basing them in whole or part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual” (para. 7.7).

The implication of such action is that the Council is complying with PE guideline on assessment at the secondary school level.

Ojerinde (1986) conducted a study to find out whether there existed any difference in the performance (in terms of Grade Point Average – GPA) of those admitted through the West Africa School Certificate (WASC); Teachers Grade II Certificates (TC II) and Pivotal Certificates into Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Nigeria. The institution awards both Bachelors degree in Education as well as Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). He concluded that:

“... while the three groups performed differently by the end of the first year of the NCE programme, they leveled up during the second year.” (p. 157, para. 1).

The question then was that: Is the performance pattern similar for holders of NECO and WAEC SSCE certificates in harmattan (first) and rain (second) semesters? Or do they perform differently in terms of Grade Point Average (GPA)? Which group is the better? These are the two questions raised in this study.

METHOD

The academic performance record of students on Education/Economics programme of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria was employed for the study.

Performance was in terms of GPA of students in 100 level during the 2001/2002 session. Only those whose results were available and complete for the two semesters in the session were listed for the study. For holders of WAEC certificates, 54 of them had their results complete as at the time of the study and the figure for holders of NECO certificates was 39. The results were copied out and subjected to simple analyses. Students' GPA is determined on a five-point scale. Performance record was considered on the basis of harmattan and rain semesters (i.e. first and second semesters).

RESULTS

The results are presented following the two questions raised earlier.

Question 1: Is the performance pattern similar for holders of NECO and WAEC SSCE certificates in harmattan and rain semesters? Table 1 presents the result of the t-test performed on the scores (results) of the two groups for 100 level.

The result in Table 1 showed that the mean GPA of the holders of WAEC SSCE result sampled ($n = 54$) was 2.66, their within-group standard deviation was 0.91. For the holders of NECO SSCE, their mean GPA was 2.64 with a standard deviation of 1.03.

The comparison of the performance of the two groups showed that the t-statistic obtained ($t_c = 0.10$) from the t-test analysis was not up to the table value ($t [df = 38] = 1.68$); hence, the inference that there was no significant difference in the performance of the two groups.

The result in Table 2 showed that there was no significant difference in the performance of the two groups ($t [df = 38] = 0.1$). This is not significant at 0.05 level. The two groups appeared homogenous, as their values of standard deviation were similar (0.97). Thus, for the second semester, the average performance of the holders of NECO SSCE was better (GPA = 2.70) than the WAEC holders' group (GPA = 2.68).

DISCUSSION

The trend of result was quite interesting as the two groups improved on their first semester performances during the second semester examinations. This may not be unconnected with the initial adjustment problem(s) that face(s) any learner in new situation (Crowl et al., 1997; Adewolu, 1999; Brooks, 2002). At the end of the second semester, the performance level indicated that holders of NECO SSCE had an average GPA of 2.70 as against 2.64 during first semester examination. This had overtaken the performance of WAEC Holders' group with a mean GPA of 2.68 for the same period. The performance of the two groups are a little above the 2.50 median mark for a GPA on a 5-point scale; they fall to the lower second-class level. The judgement on whether one measure (i.e. either WAEC or NECO versions of the SSCE) is superior may not be easily answered within the scope of this study. One interesting thing was that the best and poorest candidates (with a GPA of 4.71 and 0.53 respectively) during the first semester were found in the NECO group. The same trend was discovered in the second semester results.

The result obtained from this study followed the trend discovered by Ojerinde (1986) when he compared the performance of students admitted

Table 1: t-test result on the performance of holders of WAEC and NECO at 100 level

Subjects	<i>n</i>	$\sum x$	$\bar{x}$	σ	t_c	t_t	<i>P</i>
WAEC Holders	54	143.42	2.66	0.91	0.1	1.68	>0.05
NECO Holders	39	103.11	2.64	1.03			

Table 2: t-test result of performance in rain semester

Subjects	<i>n</i>	$\sum x$	$\bar{x}$	σ	t_c	t_t	<i>P</i>
WAEC Holders	54	144.81	2.68	0.97	0.1	1.68	>0.05
NECO Holders	39	105.37	2.70	0.97			

into the NCE programme of Adeyemi College of Education, (Ondo, Nigeria) through WASC, TCII and Pivotal certificates. At the initial stage of the programme, the three groups performed differently but their performances became more homogenous as they progressed towards the third year.

CONCLUSION

Arising from the result obtained from the analyses in this work, it was concluded that the two media of admission into 100 level are essentially equivalent. The mean performance of the two groups was in the same class of degree and the differences in their mean GPA were not significant.

However, authors wish to caution that the conclusion here may not be sacrosanct. There may be the need for further investigation on the sample as well as similar study on a larger sample because performance differences may be caused by several other factors other than mode /medium

of admission into a programme of instruction (Brooks, 2002). Notwithstanding this however, the two versions of the SSCE are equivalent.

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