MODES OF ADMISSION AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY AWKA

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Abstract
Educational programmes need periodical assessment to ensure that the long-term goals that necessitated its introduction are met. Modes of entry into Nigerian universities are no exception. In the quest to ascertain the entry mode that has yielded better academic performance of graduates, a study on modes of admission and students' academic performance; a situational analysis of English Department in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka became imminent. Therefore, the study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. It was a descriptive research design of ex-post facto type. The study covered eight academic sessions, four years before the introduction of post-UTME from 2001-2005 and four years after the introduction of post-UTME from 2005-2009.The sample was 694 UTME only and 232 Post-UTME students making the total of 926 drawn from the department following the admission and registration lists of those who were admitted through UTME only and those admitted through UTME/ post-UTME respectively. Two instruments were used for data collection which included: Admission list and student's academic records. Mean statistics was used to analyze the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using z-test. The findings revealed the following:(i) the academic performance of graduates admitted through UTME/post-UTME from 2005-2009 was higher than graduates admitted through UTME only from 2001-2005.(ii)there is no difference in academic performance of male and female English graduates admitted either through UTME only or through UTME/post-UTME. Based on the findings, the study recommended, among others that (i) Federal government and NUC should mandate every Nigerian universities to conduct post-UTME screening exercise for its obvious reasons(ii) Curriculum planners/expert should work with individual universities to ensure that the content of post-UTME screening test is in line with the admission seekers choice of course.

Introduction
Education is an important vehicle of change and development. The knowledge students gather and the skills they develop that stem from their education allow them to be independent both technologically, economically, socially and even culturally. Education gives one the opportunity to become a productive member of a civilized society, expands ones horizon, vision and creates awareness for possible innovations. In formal educational institutions, success is measures by assessing the academic performance of students, which implies how well a student met standards set by local, government and institution of study (https:www.scribd.com).

Assessment in education became popular after the Second World War; since then views, strategies and concerns over assessment have proliferated (Nelson & Dawson, 2014). Assessment has been defined by Jim and Sean (2004) as central to the practice of education because, it provides the ways to measure individual and institutional success and so can have a profound driving influence on system they were designed to serve. In essence, academic performance is actually a standard or a parameter for

ascertaining the capabilities of a student or a program. To Arasian (2005) academic performance is an expression of one's achievement from school based instructions. Adekunle (2012) reported that Nigerian universities were rated among the best 20 in Africa This situation may no longer be sacrosanct today, It is doubtful whether any of them is among the best 30 in Africa or is among the best 1000 in the world. A more disturbing state is the common observation that many graduates from universities are being rejected by the labour market because of low academic competence.

Some educationists have argued that the incompetence of many university students is precipitated by the selection modes used in admitting them into the university. (Oluwatayo, 2003). Olayemi and Oyeleken (2009) suggested that, to understand why graduates from Nigerian universities are dropping in academic quality, one needs to look at the various entry modes of the entrants in order to distinguish which of them has been able to produce the best of graduates. As a result of aforementioned situation, it became pertinent to investigate the various modes of admission into the Bachelors Degree Regular programme of the university in order to counsel and suggest viable innovations that will address the malaise in the Nigerian tertiary education.

Basically, Nigerian educational system runs three major modes of entry through which a student may gain admission into Bachelor Degree Regular programme as specified by the National universities commission (NUC). These include admission through Direct Entry, admission through the UTME/PUTME, and admission through other preliminary programmes (Igho, Kpolovie, Eke & Iderima, 2014). *Ab initio,* there were neither University Matriculation Examinations (UME) now Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) conducted by Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) or any aforesaid modes. Before the inception of JAMB, individual universities in Nigeria conducted their own entrance examinations, but that system created a lot of challenges among which were the issue of multiple applications, general untidiness or uncoordinated system of university admission, and high cost implication for the candidates (Omodara, 2004). In response to these problems, the federal government of Nigeria established JAMB in 1977 as a centralized examination body saddled with the responsibility of conducting placement examinations into Nigerian higher institutions of learning. The first examination of this body was conducted in 1978 and it recorded a huge success (Osakuade, 2011).

According to Ifedili and Ifedili (2010), few years after the introduction of JAMB, individuals, corporate bodies, and different levels of government accused JAMB of massive corrupt practices which included all sorts of examination malpractices like hiring of mercenaries, creating special centers, alteration of scores by JAMB computer operators to mention but few. Ezeugwu (2013) asserted that JAMB came under heavy criticisms over the years by Nigerians for its inability to organize credible examinations for entry into tertiary institutions in the country. This enhanced the universities' loss of confidence in the UTME conducted by JAMB evidenced in the lack of correlation between candidates UTME scores and their performance in university examinations. Many universities started to conduct additional screening exercise which led to the introduction of Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME) (Olayemi & Oyeleken, 2009).

Amateareotubo (2006) described how the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the policy of Post-UTME screening by universities in 2005 through the then minister of Education, Mrs. Chinwe Nora Obaji who assured that though there was need to screen potential students before admission, but the exercise should only be to confirm the originality of the candidates; and it should be at no cost to the candidates. Odede and Akoso (2012) reported that contrary to the initial plan, university of Lagos was the pacesetter not only in the conduct of Post-UTME but also the first to charge fees for the exercise. They also posited that it might be the financial returns from the exercise that was responsible for the stiff defense it enjoys among the perpetrators rather than the perceived inadequacies of JAMB. The entire process of securing admission into universities became cumbersome and expensive (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2010) viewed that the admission of low caliber candidates led to high failure rates, increased examination malpractice, high drop-out rate and general production of graduates with poor academic excellence.

As it relates to modes of admission and academic excellence, Olajide, Okewole and Agboola (2015) reported that contrary to expectation that all students admitted into the university irrespective of the mode of entry will be able to cope with the academic rigors, yet it was observed that some students dropped out on the way without graduating from the university. Many students changed their courses and while others spent extra years before graduating; and more often some students ended up with third class or adversely with low Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) from many universities in Nigeria thus compounding their chances of gainful employment. Hence, there have been conflicting findings on the predictive strength of modes of entry in forecasting students' academic performance in university examinations.

Researches such as Busayo (2010) and Babatunde (2017) studied UTME scores of student's and post-UTME score of student's as predictors of academic performance and revealed post-UTME as a better predictor of academic excellence over UTME. While Evroro (2009) and Ezema(2006), in their separate studies revealed that there was no significant relationship between modes of entry into the university and students' academic performance. In another vein, student's admitted through remedial programmes performed better than student's admitted through either UTME or post-UTME (Okpilike, 2011) while Ojo (2005) reported that direct entry students performed better than UTME students and other remedial students. Yet Ajaja (2010) reported no significant relationship between modes of entry into the university and students academic performance. The research reports on students' academic performance as relate to modes of entry have thus been inconsistent, varied and/or even controversial. Hanson (2000) viewed that students' academic performance can also be determined by different conditions other than modes of entry such as learning abilities, race and gender.

Arthur, Sam, Osei and Kattah (2019), indicated that gender has been found to influence the academic performance of male and female students and called the attention of institutions of higher learning, governments and individuals, to investigate the extent to which gender determines academic performance. Gender differences in academic achievements of students have been examined over the years with conflicting results. Research findings of Arthur, et al, (201 Dike, Anyanwu, Bitrus, Hadiza & Folashade (2018); Nnamani & Oyibe, (2016); Goni, Wali, Ati & Bularafa, (2015) found in their separate studies at various times that there was no significant differences in the academic performance of male and female subjected in various areas while Adigun, Onihunwa, Irunokhai, Sada and Adesina (2015) indicated that male students had slightly better performance compared to the female students, though was not significant. It is obvious from the literature that the role of gender in students' academic performance is equally conflicting, hence it is to be used in this study to make a double check rather than as a final determinant of issues under study.

On students academic performance as related to modes of entry which has remained controversial all these years and has also been an issue of great concern to people who are interested in education industry in Nigeria especially curriculum experts, the researchers are curious to establish their own findings, based on the issue on discourse with a situational analysis of graduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Statement of the Problem
Every professional wants to be of use to his environment and state, English graduates inclusive .One of the gifts from a nation-state to her citizenry is to ensure that the major developmental instrument is given the necessary attention. In Nigeria, higher education is critical for true development. No wonder the attention on functionality made evident with the emergence of UTME conducted by JAMB and subsequent introduction of post-UTME all in bid to salvage the Nigeria educational system.

Research reports revealed that modes of entry to a greater extent determine students' academic performance and variously recommended that, in order to understand why graduates from Nigerian universities are dropping in academic quality, a glance must be cast at the entrants and distinguish among them the mode that would or has produced better academically disposed graduates. Some studies also indicated that gender is one of such factors that can have considerable effects on students' academic performance.

Based on the above observations and empirical from previous related studies this study, therefore sought to find out, if assessment of academic performance of graduates admitted through UTME only in English language Department will generate data that will prove their superiority over students' admitted through UTME/post-UTME in the same Department using their CGPA as a parameter.

Purpose of Study
The main purpose of this study was to do a situational analysis on modes of entry used for the admission of students in Nigerian universities by comparatively assessing the academic performance of graduates admitted with UTME only and those admitted with UTME/post-UTME in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Specifically, the study sought to find out:
1.   Academic performance of graduates admitted through UTME from 2001-2005
2.   Academic performance of those admitted through UTME/post-UTME from 2005-2009.
3.   The academic performance of male and female (English) graduates admitted either through UTME from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME / post-UTME from 2005-2009.

Research Questions
        The following research questions guided the study;
1.   What are the differences in the academic performance of (English) graduates admitted through UTME from 2001-2005 and those admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009.
2.   What are the differences in academic performance of male and female (English) graduates admitted either through UTME from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009?

Hypotheses
        The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha levels in the present study:
1.   There are no significant differences in academic performance of graduates admitted through UTME from 2001-2005 and those admitted through UTME/post-UTME from 2005-2009.
2.   There are no significant differences in academic performance of male and female graduates admitted either through UTME from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME/post-UTME from 2005-2009.

Scope of the Study
The study are delimited to the academic performance of graduates admitted through UTME only and those admitted through UTME/post-UTME of English Department in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka campus. Specifically the study covered one faculty and one department. The study also is delimited to eight (8) academic sessions, four (4) sessions before the introduction of post-UTME from 2001-2005 and four (4) sessions after the introduction of post-UTME from 2005-2009. Also male and female graduates of chosen faculty and department were considered. All the students admitted and registered in regular programmes were in focus. The students' modes of entry were assessed using the graduates Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) as a parameter.

Significance of the Study
This study would be of immense benefit to many stake holders, amongst whom are the ministry of education and national universities commission (NUC), universities, curriculum planners/experts, JAMB, admission seekers, parents/guardians and researchers as well.
The findings of this study have helped to ascertain the effectiveness of each modes of entry (UTME & UTME/post-UTME) introduced in Nigerian university system. The ministry of education and the national university commission (NUC) as supervisory bodies to universities will be exposed to the knowledge of student's academic performance so far. Findings of this study have provided empirical evidence about the impact of each modes of entry into universities (UTME & post-UTME) on student's academic performance for decision and policy making.

Invariably, the findings of this study which have provided actual performance of the two popular modes of entry will serve as an eye opener to universities on whether to uphold or to redress on decisions concerning admissions. Again, with the knowledge of students' academic performance on these modes of entry, universities will be convinced on their actions so far, as this study has acquainted them with entry modes that produced better academic performance of graduates over years for strict adoption. Curriculum planners/experts with the knowledge of the findings of this study will be encouraged to take decisions and make driving policies concerning the mode(s) of entry which should be continually upheld for a better academic excellence in future. The knowledge of students' academic performance on modes of entry will offer them opportunity to make curriculum reviews that will solve societal problems.

Furthermore, the findings of this study will enlighten the Joint admission and matriculation board (JAMB) on the student's academic performance over years. The knowledge of the finding will serve as a standard of check for the board to assess their impact on the caliber/quality of student they certified for admission into Nigerian universities for urgent adjustment and for posterity. The benefits accruable from this study will help clear doubts from the minds of parents/guardians who saw screening examination as scam, massive extortion, waste of time and resources. The knowledge of student's academic performance will offer them opportunity to propagate for the mode of entry that has produced better academic performance of students' for genuine acceptance. Finally, the result of this study will serve as a framework, baseline data and literature to any researcher who may wish to carry out research on modes of entry (UTME & post-UTME). This empirical evidence will add to already existing literature that has to do with modes of entry as relates to student's academic performance in any Nigerian universities.

Research Design
The design of this study was an ex-post facto type. According to Nworgu (2015) Ex-Post Facto research design is suitable for studies in which the researchers usually have no control over the variables of interest and therefore cannot manipulate them. Since the researcher has no control over the CGPA of graduates, Ex-post facto research design was best adopted for the research.

Area of the study
The study was carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, a federal university located in southeast of Nigeria in Anambra State Capital, Awka. The population of this research study was (*926*). The population consists of all the students admitted and registered in regular programmes from 2001 to 2005 academic sessions through UTME only and those admitted and registered in regular programmes from 2005 to 2009 academic sessions respectively through UTME/post-UTME in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study covered eight academic sessions; Four years before introduction of post-UTME and four years after the introduction of post-UTME.

Sample and Sampling Technique
The sample for this study comprised of the (926) regular students' admitted through UTME only from 2001-2005 and those admitted from UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009 in English Department of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, campus.

Instrument for Data Collection
Two instruments were employed for the purpose of data collection in this study. The instruments are students' head count records collected from the office of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Students Academic Record from the (Registry) Examination unit, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instruments covered the years under review. The graduates who were admitted with UTME only were drawn from 2001 to 2005 academic years and those that were admitted with UTME/Post-UTME were drawn from 2005 to 2009 respectively. No validation of any instrument was carried out, this was because the two instrument used for data collection were original records and all information collected from them are from the original sources and thus adjudged to be correct, authentic and reliable(Borich,2004).

Method of Data Collection

All the data used for the study were collected from already existing records in the university. Considering the number of years involved in the study, the researcher solicited the approval of the Registrar of the University for Pertinent Data required for the study. The researcher further sought the approval of Director of academic planning for the list of students admitted in the various faculties/departments of study, based on their modes of entry and academic session.

The researcher also went further to seek the approval of the Deputy – Registrar Examination and the assistance of the staff of the unit for academic status of the students (CGPA) admitted through UTME only and those admitted through UTME /Post-UTME in the chosen faculty and department, due and down to their modes of entry and the academic sessions were involved in the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using mean to answer the research questions. Decisions were taken based on the mean difference of the two major variables under considerations. The null hypotheses were tested using z-test. Thus the null hypotheses were rejected when the calculated value was higher than the critical value and accepted when the critical value was higher than the calculated value at 0.05 levels of significance.

Results

The research question 1 sought to find the differences in academic performance of graduates admitted through UTME and those admitted through UTME/Post UTME from 2005-2009.

Research Question 1

z-Test: Two Sample for Means

	UTME Only	*UTME/Post-UTME*	Mean Difference
Mean	2.804209486	3.079005525	0.274796
Known Variance	0.437927	0.550798	
Observations	506	181	

From table, the mean difference in academic performance of the two modes of entry is 0.274796.The analyses reveal that the mean score of graduates admitted through UTME/Post-UTME is higher than the graduates admitted through UTME only.

On the differences in academic performance of male and female (English) graduates admitted either through UTME from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009 the result is presented in the tale below.

Research Question 2

z-Test: Two Sample for Means

	Female	*Male*	Mean Difference
Mean	2.894794521	2.823806818	-0.07099
Known Variance	0.486681477	0.465692282	
Observations	511	176	

The data analyzed on Table 2 shows that the mean CGPA for female English graduates admitted either through UTME only or UTME/Post-UTME is 2.894794521 and that of 176 male English graduates admitted either through UTME only or UTME/Post-UTME is 2.823806818.Therefore, the mean

difference in academic performance of female English graduates and male English graduates is -0.07099. Also the analyses reveal that the mean score of female is slightly higher than the male graduates admitted either from the two modes of entry, but not significant.

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels in the present study:

1 There is no significant difference in academic performance of English graduates admitted through UTME from 2001-2005 and those admitted through UTME/post-UTME from 2005-2009.

z-Test: Two Sample for Means

	UTME only	UTME/Post-UTME	Mean Difference
Mean	2.804209486	3.079005525	0.274796
Known Variance	0.437927	0.550798	
Observations	506	181	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		
Z	-4.395442087		
P(Z<=z) one-tail	5.52738E-06		
z Critical one-tail	1.644853627		
P(Z<=z) two-tail	1.10548E-05		
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985		

Analyses on Table 3 reveal significant difference in academic performance, given that Z calculated is -4.395442087 while Z critical is 1.959963985 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected thus, there is significant difference in academic performance of English graduates admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009 as against those admitted through UTME only from 2001-2005. From the analyses it could be observed also that English graduates admitted through UTME/Post-UTME performed better than their counterparts admitted through UTME only.

2 On whether there was a significant difference in academic performance of male and female (English) graduates admitted either through UTME from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME/post-UTME from 2005-2009 the table below subsists:

z-Test: Two Sample for Means

	Female	*Male*	Mean Difference
Mean	2.894794521	2.823806818	-0.07099
Known Variance	0.486681477	0.465692282	
Observations	511	176	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0		
Z	1.183393218		
P(Z<=z) one-tail			
z Critical one-tail	1.644853627		
P(Z<=z) two-tail	0.236653344		
z Critical two-tail	1.959963985		

In Table 4, the analyses reveal no significant difference in academic performance, given that the Z calculated is 1.183393218 while Z critical is 1.959963985 at 0.05 level of significance .Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected thus, there is no significant difference in academic performance of male and female English graduates admitted either through UTME only from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009.

Discussion
There was a significant difference in the academic performance of English graduates admitted through UTME from 2001-2005 and those admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009.The finding revealed that the mean performance score of English graduates admitted through UTME/Post-UTME was higher than their counterparts admitted through UTME only. This study is in line with past researchers such as Busayo (2010) and Babatunde (2017), in their separate studies found significant difference in modes of entry as it affects students' academic performance. Findings revealed that students' admitted through UTME/Post-UTME performed higher compared to students' admitted through UTME only. Taking a contrary stand were the findings of Ajaja (2010); Evroro (2009) as well as Ezema (2006) in their individual studies revealed that there was no significant relationship between modes of entry into the university and students' academic performance.

There was no significant difference in academic performance of male and female English graduates admitted either through UTME only from 2001-2005 or those admitted through UTME/Post-UTME from 2005-2009.The finding agrees with the research findings of Arthur,et al(2019), Dike,et al (2018); Nnamani & Oyibe (2016); Goni,et al (2015) found in their separate studies at various times that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female students' subjected in various chosen areas .Conflicting study was research finding of Adigun, et al(2015) which indicated that male students had slightly better academic performance compared to the female students, though was not significant

Conclusion
It is crystal clear from the research findings that the emergence of Post-UTME in Nigerian educational system has proven to produce graduates with better academic performance over graduates admitted with UTME only. From the finding also, it was observed that since the introduction of Post-UTME screening examination the admission intake for English Department has drastically reduced compared to higher number of admission intakes common during post-era.

Recommendations
1. Federal government and National university commission (NUC) should mandate every Nigerian university to conduct Post-UTME screening exercise for its obvious reason of producing graduates with better academic performance.
2. Curriculum expert/planners should work with individual universities to ensure that the content of post-UTME screening test is in line with the admission seekers choice of course.
3. JAMB should continue to conduct external examination for all Nigerian universities while individual universities should be legally allowed to administer internal (post-UTME) examination for their respective universities.

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