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Universities Preliminary Examinations Board
Programme in Nigeria**

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Candidates' Assessment of the Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board
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Abstract

This study investigated the Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB)'s candidates' rating and assessment of the programme in Nigeria within the blueprint of quantitative paradigm of the descriptive survey research design. The participants consisted of 139 JUPEB candidates during the 2019/2020 session enrolled in three universities. Three research questions and one null hypothesis were raised to guide the study. Data collected through the Current JUPEB Candidates' Questionnaire (Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87) were coded on the SPSS version 24 in which the research questions were answered using percentage and mean and the null hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that the current JUPEB candidates rated and assessed the JUPEB Programme in terms of quality and access and in terms of facilities and logistics for examinations respectively as satisfactory and that they would recommend the Programme to family and friends. Also, there was a statistically significant influence of type of university on their rating, in favour of the government-owned university. Based on these findings, it is recommended that university governing councils should make substantial funding available for the JUPEB centres to increase quality of outputs from the JUPEB centres.

Introduction

Today, Nigeria has 174 universities (43 Federal, 52 State, and 79 private) (National University Commission, 2020) thereby making the Nigerian University system the largest university system in Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this proliferation of universities in Nigeria, the university system is bedeviled with many problems (Ramon-Yusuf, 2019). These include inadequacies in facilities for teaching, learning and research; inadequate funding; deficits in teacher quality and quantity (including quality of professors); governance deficits (including stemming the tide of strikes) and depressed quality of graduates. Others according to Ramon-Yusuf (2019) are inadequacies in access; deficiencies in research and postgraduate training; academic corruption and other social vices; regulation by NUC and professional bodies; promoting ICT-driven universities; fostering skills development and entrepreneurship; and gender issues. Thus, urgent reforms are needed for the realization of the aims of university education in Nigeria, which according to the National Policy on Education are:

- i. To contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training;
- ii. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and the society;
- iii. To develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- iv. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- v. To promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- vi. To forge and cement national unity; and
- vii. To promote national and international understanding and interactions (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013).

To solve the problem of inadequate funding and inadequacies in facilities and access, many universities in Nigeria established the foundation programmes to increase their internally generated revenue. These foundation programmes varied from one university to the other with no standard curricula and uniform examinations. Thus, the foundation programmes were unique to the university running them and this created the problem of quality in

the preparation of students. Sometimes, in 2013, the then Minister of Education, Professor Ruqayyatu Rufai, authorized the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to discontinue the acceptance of students from the Foundation Programmes of the various Universities through the Direct Entry (DE) mode. This was an antiphon to the dogged objections from the JAMB about matters of standards and homogeneity in admission process. From time immemorial, the Academic Staff Union of the Universities (ASUU) has been calling for the revitalization of the university education in Nigeria to pave way for quality output, increase access and improve infrastructural development that will make Nigerian universities rank among the first 100 universities in the world.

As part of effort to quality assure entrants by Direct Entry mode into the nations' universities, the JAMB was however adamant of not admitting products of the various Foundation Programmes of Universities except those with the Interim Joint Matriculation Board (IJMB) certified candidates apart from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO). Further negotiations on the way forward led to the proposition for a new examination body for the Foundation Programme, which the University of Lagos advocated. As a result, a local committee was set up within the University of Lagos to look into the likelihood of instituting a new examination body such that the cooperating Universities would be conducting an examination centrally. Prof. Duro Ajeyalemi was appointed the Chairman of this Committee. The committee eventually came up with the curricula for the various subjects, and the name Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB) was officially accepted by the Senate for the new examination body. The University decided to involve other universities and submitted the report to the Minister of Education, who then requested contributions from the various stakeholders. Unexpectedly, Prof. Ruqqayat was around this period removed as Minister, while her deputy Mr Nyesom Wike took over as the substantive Minister of Education. It was in fact, Mr Wike, now the Governor of Rivers State, which on September 30, 2013, after a chain of consultations, ratified JUPEB, as an independent Examination body in Nigeria. After the University of Lagos got the authorization, Prof. Bello took it to the CVC of the old (first generation) Federal Universities precisely to invite them to become members of the JUPEB Board. After their reception to join the Board, on April 4, 2014, the Board of JUPEB was installed with Prof. Bello as the Chairman and the Vice Chancellors of eight other Universities as partners.

Consequently, the VCs instantaneously formed a committee to come up with a business model for the JUPEB and the Committee recommended 240 million Naira as the initial take-off fund for the new body. Each of the partnering universities was now asked to go and get the approval of their respective University Senate and Council. It was at this meeting that Prof. Duro Ajeyalemi was unanimously appointed the pioneer Coordinator of the JUPEB. All the Universities eventually turned up except the Representative of the University of Ibadan; as a result, her slot was shared between the JAMB and the University of Ilorin, who perhaps might have preferred to be the prime mover of the new examination body. It was agreed that each of the partnering Universities should have 6.125% shares, while the University of Lagos as the prime mover should have 44%, conceivably since it could afford it. However, the University of Ibadan defaulted on taking its slot; the JAMB took 3.00% that originally belonged to the University of Ibadan while the University of Ilorin took the remaining 3.125% of the slot reserved for the University of Ibadan. All the Universities eventually paid up and thus the 10-man governing Board of the JUPEB became fully instituted.

The JUPEB is a nationwide examinations body ratified by the Federal Government of Nigeria in December 2013 and was officially founded in April 2014 by a conglomerate of ten (10) consorting universities steered by the University of Lagos. It has the responsibility of conducting common and standard examinations for the candidates, who have been exposed to a minimum of one-year approved courses in the different Universities' Foundation and/or Diploma Programmes and are seeking Direct Entry admissions into University courses at the 200 Level in Nigerian and partnering foreign universities. The first of such examinations was conducted in August 2014 and successful candidates were admitted into 200 Level by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) based on the recommendations from the universities. With effect from 2015, JUPEB Examinations were held in June except for the year 2020 because of the emergence of COVID-19 that all Universities were shut down to curtail the spread of the coronavirus. The 2020 JUPEB Examinations were held in September. The vision of JUPEB is to be an outstanding examination body that will conduct common, standard and credible examinations based on a world-class curriculum, for candidates seeking Direct Entry admissions into Nigerian and foreign-

based partner universities. The mission is to facilitate Direct Entry admissions into various University courses globally by conducting credible examinations for candidates taught on a qualitative and well-balanced curriculum.

Stakeholders in education often refer to individuals that are greatly concerned with, have vested interests in or affected by issues within the education sector (Adebayo, 2013). As an examination body, major stakeholders in JUPEB programme are the candidates whose preparations and readiness for the JUPEB examinations matter a lot in achieving their academic success. Avci, Ring & Mitchelli (2015) noted that there is usually a contractual relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders, since they can benefit or be harmed by the operations of such organization. Further, they noted that the social culture of a student can shape the dynamics and culture of an educational institution and the expectations with them (p. 49). As a major stakeholder in the JUPEB programme, it is imperative that candidates' feedbacks are sourced from time to time in order to achieve the benefits of better insights from their views and opinions, have greater buy-in for JUPEB as well elicit greater trusts for the examination system and processes among the candidates. Further, Paraschivescu & Şavga (2016) noted that to effectively manage education quality, focus should be on building networks between its different stakeholders, i.e. those who design, produce, evaluate the programme, those who implement it, those who finance and those who benefit from or affected by the system.

JUPEB as a policy reform (Mohammad, 2016) in the Nigerian higher education is expected to present notable modifications essential to promote, fast-track, widen, expand and sustain the university's effort in enhancing the quality of entrants pursuing university admission through the Direct Entry mode. Just as teachers and parents play an important role in educational reforms in any country (Mohammad, 2016), students are accepted in the educational political scenery as critical stakeholders whose voices researchers and policymakers should give some acceptance (VanderJagt, 2013). Hardly, however, do researchers and policymakers give attention to the voices of students as both the foci of educational reforms and most important participants in the nation's education. Since the inception of JUPEB in 2014 as a national examinations body, there had been little empirical investigation of its activities with no study targeted at rating the programme in terms of quality and access as well as assessing the programme facilities and logistics for examinations among the stakeholders. Evidence suggests that in spite of the proliferation of universities occasioned by privatization, access to university education in Nigeria is less than 30% of the qualified candidates (Okotoni & Adebakin, 2015). This is a major problem as the number of qualified admission seekers yearly is greater than the available vacancies in the Nigerian universities. Among the most important participants or stakeholders of the JUPEB Programme are the students or the candidates. By candidates, we mean certified graduates of the senior secondary school who are enrolled in a one-year intensive training in JUPEB approved three subjects, which are prerequisites to the intended course of study in the university in any JUPEB approved university centre in Nigeria. The present study would like to fill these lacunas in the literature by investigating current candidates' rating of the JUPEB Programme in terms of quality and access as well as assessing the Programme facilities and logistics for examinations in Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study investigated current candidates' rating of the JUPEB Programme in terms of quality and access as well as assessing the Programme facilities and logistics for examinations in Nigeria. Specific research questions guiding the study are:

1. How do Current JUPEB candidates rate the JUPEB Programme in terms of quality and access?
2. Do Current JUPEB candidates recommend JUPEB Programme to family/friends?
3. How do Current JUPEB candidates assess the JUPEB Programme in terms of facilities and logistics for examination?

Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the Current JUPEB candidates' rating of the JUPEB Programme in terms of quality and access based on type of university.

Methodology

This study relied on a non-experimental quantitative paradigm of a descriptive survey research design. The participants consisted of 139 current JUPEB candidates from three Universities (one state university and two private universities) JUPEB centres in the South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria. The sample could be disaggregated into 94 JUPEB candidates from the private universities and 35 from the state university. The instrument tagged the Current JUPEB candidate Questionnaire (Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87) was used for data collection in the study. The instrument was validated by a team of experts after which it was converted to

Google forms because at the time of data collection there was a total lockdown of the country occasioned by the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic. The Google forms questionnaire was sent to the Centre Director of the participating university through email and WhatsApp for onward transfer through either WhatsApp or email to the current JUPEB candidates. The current JUPEB candidates were instructed to respond to the questionnaire online and submit it online after completion. The responses of the current JUPEB candidates were coded on the SPSS version 24 and the coded data were analysed using descriptive statistics of bar chart for the demographic variables and percentages and mean for the research questions. The only hypothesis in the study was tested using an independent samples t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: How do Current JUPEB candidates rate the JUPEB Programme?

Table 1: Current JUPEB candidate rating of the JUPEB Programme

S/N	Statement	SA %	A%	D%	SD%	Mean
1	JUPEB Programme provides better access to university education in Nigeria and abroad	58.3	38.8	2.9	0.0	3.55
2	JUPEB Programme has a balanced calendar	41.7	51.1	7.2	0.0	3.35
3	The JUPEB approved syllabus is comprehensive enough for undergraduates Direct Entry admission	56.1	36.0	7.2	0.7	3.47
4	The JUPEB approved syllabus provides guidelines for effective implementation in my Centre	43.2	53.2	3.6	0.0	3.40
5	JUPEB examination is effectively supervised	56.8	38.8	4.3	0.0	3.53
6	JUPEB has effective monitoring of lecture attendance in my Centre	55.4	40.3	4.3	0.0	3.51
7	The fact that JUPEB results are released on time makes me accept it	51.8	39.6	6.5	2.2	3.41
8	Centres usually accepts candidates from other coaching Centres	25.2	43.2	18.7	12.9	2.81
9	JUPEB Examinations past questions are easily accessible to tutors and candidates in other Centres	34.5	46.0	12.9	6.5	3.09

As contained in Table 1, 97.1% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that JUPEB Programme provides better access to university education in Nigeria and abroad with a mean score of 3.55. 92.8% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that JUPEB Programme has a balanced calendar with a mean score of 3.35. 92.1% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that the JUPEB approved syllabus is comprehensive enough for undergraduates Direct Entry admission with a mean score of 3.47. 96.4% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that the JUPEB approved syllabus provides guidelines for effective implementation in my Centre has a mean score of 3.40. 95.6% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that JUPEB examination is effectively supervised with a mean score of 3.53. 95.7% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that JUPEB has effective monitoring of lecture attendance in my Centre with a mean of 3.51. 91.4% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that JUPEB results are released on times make them accept it with a mean score of 3.41. 68.4% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that Centres usually accepts candidates from other coaching Centres with a mean score of 2.81. 80.5% of the Current JUPEB candidates Strongly Agreed/Agreed that JUPEB Examinations past questions are easily accessible to tutors and candidates in other Centres with a mean of 3.09. The average mean score of the Current JUPEB candidate rating of the JUPEB Programme is 3.35, which is greater than the benchmark of 2.25. This implies that the Current JUPEB candidates rate the JUPEB Programme to be effective.

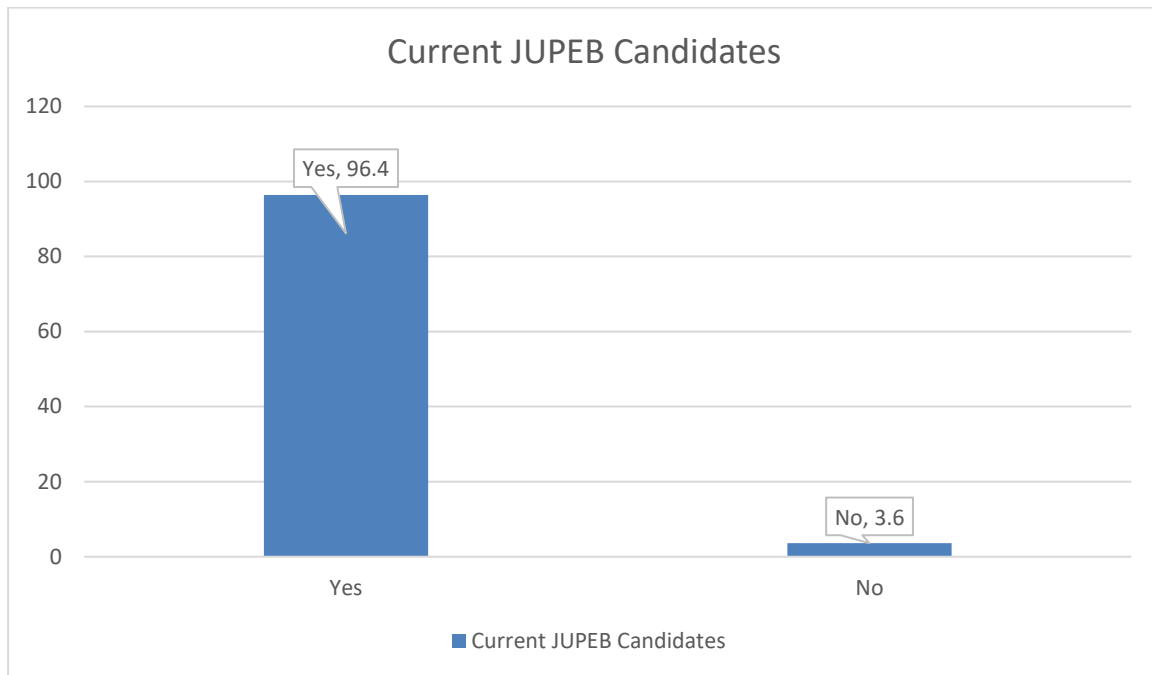
Research Question 2: Do Current JUPEB candidates recommend JUPEB Programme to family/friends?

Figure 1. JUPEB candidates recommending JUPEB Programme to family/friends

The Figure 1 above revealed that 134(96.4%) of the current JUPEB candidates will recommend the JUPEB Programme to family/friends while 5(3.6%) will not do so.

Research Question 3: How do Current JUPEB candidates assess the JUPEB Programme?

Table 2. Current JUPEB candidates' assessment of the JUPEB Programme

S/N	Statement	Excellent %	Satisfactory %	Fair%	Poor%	Mean
1	Quality of questions	54.0	40.3	5.0	0.7	3.47
2	Syllabus	57.6	34.5	6.5	1.4	3.48
3	Tutors mastery of knowledge	55.4	39.6	3.6	1.4	3.49
4	Facilities for teaching and learning	52.5	38.8	7.2	1.4	3.42
5	Continuous assessment modalities	56.1	38.1	5.0	0.7	3.50
6	Security of exam materials	64.0	33.1	2.9	0.0	3.61
7	Exam supervision process	62.6	35.3	2.2	0.0	3.60
8	Organization of practical activities	51.1	42.4	5.0	1.4	3.43

As contained in Table 2, the Current JUPEB candidates assessed the JUPEB Programme Quality of questions, syllabus, Tutors mastery of knowledge and Facilities for teaching and learning to be excellent/satisfactory with mean scores of 3.47, 3.48, 3.49 and 3.42 respectively. The Current JUPEB candidates also assessed the continuous assessment modalities, security of exam materials, exam supervision process and organization of practical activities to be excellent/satisfactory with mean scores of 3.50, 3.61, 3.60 and 3.43 respectively. Average mean score of 3.50 implies that the Current JUPEB candidates assessed the JUPEB Programme excellently and satisfactorily.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the Current JUPEB candidate rating of the JUPEB Programme based on university type.

Table 3. t-test comparison of current JUPEB candidate rating of the JUPEB Programme by university type

University Type	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	Sig	Decision
Private	94	29.4	4.54	137	2.73	0.007	Rejected
State	45	31.5	3.37				

From Table 3 above, it can be deduced that there was a significant difference between Private and State Universities current JUPEB candidates rating of JUPEB Programme. This is reflected in the result: $df (137) t = 2.73, p < 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant difference between the mean score of Private and State Universities' Current JUPEB candidates rating of the JUPEB Programme at 0.05 alpha level.

Discussion

The results of this study have shown that the Current JUPEB candidates rated the JUPEB Programme effective. This rating could be ascribed to the Current JUPEB candidates' perception of the JUPEB Programme as providing better access to university education in Nigeria and abroad. To them, the JUPEB Programme has a balanced calendar and a comprehensive syllabus good enough for undergraduates Direct Entry admission. The approved JUPEB syllabus provides guidelines for its effective implementation at the Centres across the nooks and crannies of Nigeria. More so, the Current JUPEB candidates affirmed that the JUPEB examination is effectively supervised and that there is effective monitoring of lecture attendance in all the JUPEB Centres. The effective rating of the JUPEB Programme by the Current JUPEB candidates might be informed by their affirmation that the prompt release of results and easy access to past examination questions made them more receptive of the JUPEB Programme.

In addition, the results of this study showed that the Current JUPEB candidates assessed the JUPEB Programme as excellent and satisfactory. They were satisfied with the quality of questions asked during examinations as shown in the past examinations questions papers. The Current JUPEB candidates were not only satisfied with the syllabus but also with the mastery of content by the tutor. It is not surprising to note that the least qualification for teaching in any of the JUPEB Centres is a master's degree. The facilities for teaching and learning were up to date and functional at the JUPEB Centres. The Current JUPEB candidates were excellently satisfied with the organisation of practical activities in centres and continuous assessment modalities instituted by the JUPEB. To them JUPEB had done well by not compromising the security of examination materials as astute supervisors are sent year-in year-out to supervise the yearly examinations across the JUPEB Centres in Nigeria.

The results of this study showed that there was a significant influence of university type on Current candidates' rating of the JUPEB Programme in favour of the government owned university. This result might be because of the availability of funding for the government owned university, which in most cases is not available for the private universities in Nigeria. Most private universities rely on funding from the founders and money accrue from tuitions to run the universities JUPEB Centres. The funding may not be enough to run the JUPEB Centres in most private universities in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The results of this study have shown that the Current JUPEB candidates would recommend JUPEB Programme to family and friends. This is true as they assessed the JUPEB Programme to be excellent and satisfactory. Their readiness to recommend JUPEB Programme to family and friends also corroborated their rating of the JUPEB Programme as effective. However, there is a need for the universities governing council to make available substantial funding for the JUPEB Centres to increase quality of output.

Recommendation

The study recommended that facilities should be made available in private universities to enhance the effectiveness of JUPEB programme and admission should be guaranteed for Qualified JUPEB candidates.

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