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Unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) a Springboard towards Producing Employable Quality University Graduates in Nigeria

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Abstract:

The examination system is the most perverted establishment in the university yet it is the most critical element in evaluation and determining of employable quality graduate. Hence, this study seeks to propose a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) that will help produce employable quality graduates and the perspectives of university undergraduates towards the proposed unified Final Degree Examination (FDE).

In other to carry out this research a survey research was adopted using an analytical research design. A sample of 280 (400 and 500) level undergraduate students were randomly selected from Tai Solarin University of Education, Babcock University and, Federal University of Agriculture, during the 2016/2017 academic year through a purposive sampling technique. A self-constructed questionnaire titled "Undergraduates Perceptions of proposed unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) Questionnaire" (UPPUFDE) was the research instrument used for data collection in this study. Face validity was established by the review of the instruments. Reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient which was 0.75. Data for this study were analyzed through the use descriptive statistics such as percent, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and inferential statistics of t-test to test the hypotheses.

The findings revealed that Undergraduate students accepts the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) adoption in Nigeria. The findings further depicted that Undergraduate student agreed that there is a need to introduce a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) system in Nigeria. The findings further revealed that level of study did not differ significantly in accepting the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) in Nigeria.

The study recommended various strategies that can be used to improve employable quality graduates in Nigeria, and also suggested further areas that should be studied in the future.

Keywords: Undergraduates, quality graduates, university education, examination, and employment

1. Introduction

Education is a concept that is universally accepted as being the impeccable instrument for the development of the potentialities of a nation which would ultimately bring about national development by way of combating poverty, illiteracy, disease and other social and economic problems and that government should strive to make education available, accessible, acceptable, equitable and adaptable.

Universities are major forces "for the growth and development of individuals and the nation. This is because through universities, skilled competent and high-quality manpower are trained to meet the need of the society at large. Notably, Amini-Philips and Akpoyowaire (2016) states that universities are the highest citadel of learning where human beings are trained to discover new knowledge and pass it on in order to produce quality professionals in all facets of human endeavours.

It is on this vein that Ibanga (2015), quoting Awokoya, a former Minister of Education in Western Region, Nigeria, who declared in a parliamentary debate that: "Educational development is imperative and urgent, which must be treated as a national emergency second only to war, and must move with the momentum of revolution."

The evolution of Universities in Nigeria can be traced to the introduction of western education into the country by Christian missionaries since 1842. From that period on, education has developed from missionary and Qur'anic schools to Primary, Secondary and Higher educational institutes. More specifically, the emergence of University in Nigeria began when Higher College, now Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), was sited in Yaba, Lagos in 1932. The establishment of Yaba College followed the introduction of three-tier system of education in the country by E. R. T. Hussey in 1930 which divided up the educational system into elementary, middle and higher levels. It was hoped that the Yaba College would develop into a University College; hence in 1948 the students of the college became the pioneer/foundation students at the University College, Ibadan (Ibanga, 2015; Ehiemetalor, 2010; Ukeje & Aisiku, 1982). Today, there is a total number of 150 (one hundred and fifty) accredited universities in Nigeria (40) federal, (42) state and (68) private universities (NUC Bulletin, 2016).

The mandate given to Universities in Nigeria has been outlined in the National Policy of Education (NPE) 2014. The document contains the goals of educational programme and the strategies adopted to achieve those goals. According to the document, the aim of University education in Nigeria is:

- To add to national development through advanced significant manpower training, to cultivate and instill proper values for the survival of the society, to cultivate the intellectual proficiency of learners to comprehend and become responsive to their environments (local and external), to gain both technical and academic skills that could aid learners, to be resourceful and beneficial members of the society, promotion and encouragement of grants and community services, to build and solidify national unity, and to promote national and international understanding and institutions (NPE, 2014).

It was also stated in the document that universities shall accomplish these by intensifying and diversifying its programmes offered for the development of higher level manpower within the context of national needs and requirements of the country. These candidates after being graduated into the main stream of the society had been found worthy in character and learning. They are also expected to apply their learning and training to the various sectors of national needs thereby bringing about growth and development of the self and the society (Ibanga, 2015).

However, Jaja (2013) disappointingly, stated that the educational system has not transformed Nigerians development, and that the quality of university education in Nigerian appears elusive because the product of our universities is not marketable and cannot compare favourably with counterparts in other parts of the world. This is translated into the many unemployable graduates roaming the streets of Nigeria. Adeyemo, Ogunleye, Oke, and Adenle (2010) affirms this fact by stating that everyday sight of the “*growing army*” of unemployed graduates roaming the streets with despair written all over their faces attests to the gravity of the job market situation in Nigeria, and has reached a frightening level. Which calls for a need to create new educational policies and practices to address these issues.

Notably, researchers have raised alarm over the poor-quality unemployable of graduates produced by Nigeria Universities. Below are some of the empirical findings reported by educational researchers in Nigeria between 2006-2017;

S/N	Authors	Year	Problems identified from their findings
1	Oyeneye, O. Y.	2006	Revealed that the quality of Nigerian University graduates was declining in recent times against the demands of graduates demands of the 21 st century society and expectations in the labour market
2	Chiemeke, S., Longe, O. B., Longe, F.A., Shaib, I.O.	2009	Revealed that employers complain that graduates are poorly prepared for work. They believe that academic standards have fallen considerably over the past decade and that a university degree or a polytechnic diploma is no longer a guarantee of communication skills or technical competence.
3	Yusuf, A., Ajidadga, U. A., Agbonna, S. A. and Olumorin, C. O	2010	Reported that graduates of Nigerian faculties of education, were inadequately prepared in both content and pedagogy, hence contributes negatively to the quality of students they produce.
4	Former President of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (Cited by Otokunefor, T)	2010	Revealed that Nigerian graduates could not take up employment opportunities because they lack basic skills and knowledge required by industries.
5	Abiodun, S. O.	2010	Revealed that employers of labour force are not only interested in graduates having higher education but also practical skills appropriate for job fulfillment which is lacking in our universities.
6	Tosanwumi Otolumefor	2011	Revealed that many University lecturers could not justify their degrees in the classrooms. Hence, most of them did not merit the job.
7	Nigerian Institute of Personnel Management (NIPM) & Report of National Employers Consultative Association (NECA) cited in Anho, J. E	2011	Revealed that the quality of Nigerian University graduates who they argue “do not meet the demands of industry
8	Ifeoma Onuoha and Kelechi Ewuzie	2012	Revealed that employers of labour often complain about poor skills displayed by graduates of Nigerian Universities, which speak volumes about the quality of the degree certificates issues by these institutions.
9	Akinyemi S., Ofem, I. B., Ikuenomore S O.	2012	Revealed that many employers reiterate that the graduates do not possess the cognitive skills required in technical disciplines, and cannot apply technical skills necessary for solving problems and enhancing business productivity.
10	Jaja, J. M.	2013	Revealed that the product of our universities is not marketable and cannot compare favourably with counterparts in other parts of the world. This is translated into the many unemployable graduates roaming the streets of Nigeria.
11	Sodipo, O. O.	2014	Revealed that graduates have continuously been found incapable of meeting up with the employment requirements of the work force and have thus been unsuccessful in either securing or keeping a job.
12	Philips Consulting Report	2014	Revealed that the current education system does not appear to be producing

S/N	Authors	Year	Problems identified from their findings
			graduates with generic and essential skills, hence the continuous increase in the rate of youth unemployment.
13	Ibanga, D. A.	2015	Revealed that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society, and the problem we see today in our educational sector, particularly the university system, is due to corruption
14	Ibijola, E. Y., & Ezeani, N. S.	2017	Revealed that evaluation and assessment of students learning process and outcome could be of great importance to quality enhancement.
15	Ngalburgi, Yakubu, and ZahradeenWala	2017	Reported that in Nigeria today, technical and vocational education graduates are vastly unemployed, due to the poor performances of the few employed technical and vocational skilled graduates in the industries.

Table 1: showing research findings based on the quality of Nigerian university graduates in relation to unemployment

To ameliorate this findings, various models and policies have been postulated and in some cases fully implemented. Which includes: increased funding, university autonomy, scrapping of Post-UTME, introduction of CBT Examinations by JAMB to avert various examination misconducts and sharp practices, introduction of Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) for university entrance, scrapping of specific professional courses offered by unspecialized universities, clapping down on inadequate and unlicensed universities, creation of Joint University Preliminary Examination Board (JUPEB), scrapping of National Diploma (ND) certification by universities, removal of pass degrees in universities, improved condition of services, better supervision by NUC, provision of study facilities, infrastructural revamp through TetFund & ETF, etc. all the above mentioned are yet to successfully unravel the wailing standard of quality employable graduates produced by the university system. Hence this study seeks to investigate and propose a solution to the bewildered problem in our university education and unemployed graduates in Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

The examination system is the most perverted establishment in Nigerian universities yet it is the most crucial element in evaluation and determining of quality employable graduate. However, the parameters of university examinations are subjective and dependent of the characters in the university system and can be easily influenced negatively by either teacher or student through sharp practices. Hence, this study seeks to propose a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) that will help produce employable quality graduates and the perspectives of university undergraduates towards the proposed unified Final Degree Examination (FDE).

3. Purpose of the Study

This study focused on Concept of Unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) as a Springboard Towards Producing Employable Quality University Graduates in Nigeria. Specifically, the study intentions are:

1. To determine Undergraduate student's perception of a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE).
2. Undergraduate student's level of acceptance of the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) adoption

4. Research Questions

The study provides answers to the following questions:

1. What is the perception of undergraduate students towards the proposed unified Final Degree Examination (FDE)?
2. Would the Undergraduate student accept the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE)?

5. Hypothesis

Two hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study as follows:

1. There is no significant difference between 400 level and 500 level students in the acceptance of the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination by undergraduates.

5.1. The Concept of Unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) in Nigerian Universities

The public perception about the appalling standard of performance of students graduating from universities in Nigeria in the recent time has reached a frightening crescendo. More disturbing is the fact that many graduates from universities are being rejected by the labor market due to low academic competence and practical skills. Yet, the general untidiness in the uncoordinated assessment system in various universities in Nigeria. There have being unified examinations like WAEC, NECO, LAW Exams and UTME in Nigeria with the intention to improve assessment and improve the educational system in country. Yet, there is no form of unified examination in our universities that assess candidates before convocation via a unified examination, which might have been the cause of the current rise of inadequate and half-baked graduates in the educational system, some educationists have argued that the incompetence of many university students after graduation is precipitated by the selection procedure of the examination assessment in the schools and poor quality facilities in the schools (Emaikwu, 2012). On this vein, a scheme was opined by Ibanga (2015), that seeks to harmonize, regularize, systemize, unify, standardize and unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) which is similar to what JAMB, WAEC, NECO and Nigerian Law School (NLS) have done.

Ibanga (2015) stated that in other to conduct a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE), there is a need to establish a proposed scheme titled; “*Joint Graduation, Convocation and Certificate Board*” (JGCCB) which shall be given the sole responsibility to:

- a) Ensure high quality of graduation, convocation and certification examinations, otherwise known as Final Degree Examination (FDE), so that only those that are adequately prepared to benefit by university certificates, diplomas and degrees do graduate from the institutions.
- b) Ensure high quality of administration of the FDE to minimize the exploits of cheats towards ensuring the good quality of graduates from the universities.
- c) Ensure a uniform standard for the conduct of degree examination and the recommendation of suitably qualified candidates to employers of labour bearing in mind the preference of the candidates.
- d) Ensure uniform certification of graduates solely with the Board logo and name.
- e) Ensure that only candidates with minimum requirement in a given discipline graduates.
- f) Ensure that the candidates’ cumulative grade point average, CGPA, tallies with his FDE scores.
- g) Ensure that only candidates who were admitted through the right procedures are graduated.
- h) Ensure that no waiver whatsoever shall be obtained for failed grade, and that best 120 credit unit shall not be used for graduation purposes.
- i) Ensure that the most competent method and personnel, other than the candidates’ Professors, are used for the examination. In addition, the candidates may be made to write the examinations in the venue other than their universities. While the scripts may be marked in a specified venue by randomized Professors other than the candidates’ like the script-marking system used by WAEC.

6. The Research Method and Procedure

6.1. Research Design

This survey research adopted an *analytical research* design.

6.2. Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all final year students in Tai Solarin University of Education of Education, Babcock University and, Federal University of Agriculture, during the 2016/2017 academic year.

6.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

S/N	University	Population	Sample
1.	Babcock University (BU)	8,050	80
2.	Tai Solarin University of Education of Education (TASUED)	12,212	100
3.	Federal University of Agriculture (FUNAAB)	15,500	100
	Total	35,762	280

Table 2: showing the distribution of the sample

A sample of 280 undergraduate students made up of 400- 500 level was selected via the random sampling technique.

6.4. Instrument for Data Collection

A self-constructed questionnaire titled “*Undergraduates Perceptions of proposed unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) Questionnaire*” (UPPUFDE) was the instrument used for data collection in this study.

6.5. Validation of Research Instrument

The pilot testing of the instruments provided the basis for refining of the items and also for the development of the final version. Face validity was established by the review of the instruments. Reliability was determined by Cronbach’s alpha coefficient which was 0.75 and indicated good internal consistency.

6.6. Method of Data Analysis

Data for this study were analyzed through the use descriptive statistics such as percent, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and inferential statistics of t-test to test the hypotheses. The level of significance was established at 0.05. For the research questions, the cut-off points of 2.50, the mid-point of the score was used in making decision as to whether to agree with the item or to disagree with the item. Consequently, items having mean score from 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while items with mean score below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

7. Results

The results of data analysis are presented in tables below:

S/N	Items	400L		500L	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	I would be glad to be assessed through a unified final degree examination before convocation.	3.00	0.92	2.40	0.66
2	The unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) should determine the eligibility for graduation and convocation in the universities.	2.76	0.64	2.73	0.70
3	The result should be used as an employment criterion in Nigeria.	2.82	0.35	2.60	0.45
4	The result should be used for admission into Postgraduate schools in Nigeria.	2.40	0.66	2.30	1.21
5	Candidates' whose cumulative grade point average, CGPA, tallies with his FDE scores should be certified for convocation in the universities.	3.04	0.46	2.28	1.12

Table 3: To determine Undergraduate student's perception of a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE)

From the data in table 3, 400L students ($X=3.00$) agreed that they would be glad to be assessed through a unified final degree examination, while 500L students ($X=2.40$) did not agree. Both 400L and 500L students (2.67 and 2.73 respectively) expressed that the unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) should determine the eligibility for graduation and convocation in the universities. Similarly, both 400L students ($X=2.40$) and 500L students ($X=2.30$) disagreed that the result should not be used as an employment criterion. Both 400L students ($X=2.82$) and 500L students ($X=2.60$) are of the opinion that the result should also not to be used for admission into Postgraduate schools in Nigeria. 400L students ($X=3.04$) agreed that candidates' whose cumulative grade point average, CGPA, tallies with his FDE scores should be certified for convocation in the universities. while 500L students ($X=2.28$) disagreed, that is should not be used.

S/N	Items	400L		500L		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	The unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) would improve the university education standard in Nigeria	3.35	0.90	3.40	0.66	Accepted
2	FDE would create quality graduates	3.60	0.42	3.72	0.61	Accepted
3	FDE would create uniformity in assessment pattern across universities in the country	2.82	0.35	3.00	0.45	Accepted
4	FDE would create a self-reflection and improve commitment among university administrators.	3.40	0.72	3.15	0.93	Accepted
5	FDE would reduce the negative influence of teachers during marking of examination and compilations of results	2.40	1.02	2.22	1.11	Rejected
6	FDE would eradicate discrepancies in universities e.g. "special" and "glorified secondary school" during job application and selection.	2.16	0.79	2.40	0.93	Rejected
7	FDE would validate First Class Honours or Second Class Honours awarded in various universities in the country	2.70	0.66	3.35	0.87	Accepted
8	FDE would ultimately make the academia to sit up professionally, because they would be conscious that the CA and other results shall have to tally with FDE scores.	2.86	0.88	3.60	0.40	Accepted
	WM	2.91	0.68	3.10	0.67	Positive

Table 4: Undergraduate student's level of acceptance of the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) adoption

The data in table 4 indicates that the mean value for all the items except items 5 and 6 for both the 400 level and 500 level students exceeded the mid-point of 2.50. In addition, the Weighted Mean (WM) scores of 2.91 and 3.10 for the two levels clearly showed that Undergraduate students accepts the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) adoption. Although, it was also reported that some of the students submits that FDE will not eradicate discrepancies in universities e.g. "special" and "glorified secondary school" during job application and selection and FDE will also not reduce the negative influence of teachers during marking of examination and compilations of results.

Groups	N	X	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
400 level	97	23.82	5.49	194	1.353	1.96	Not
500 level	99	25.34	5.35				Significant

Table 5: T-Test Showing if there is a significant difference between 400 level and 500 level students in the acceptance of the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination by undergraduates

From table 5, the t-calculated value of 1.353 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Hypothesis one is therefore not acceptable. Implying that 300 and 400 level students did not differ significantly in accepting the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) adoption.

8. Conclusion

This study examined Concept of Unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) as a Springboard Towards Producing Employable Quality University Graduates in Nigeria. Using some selected universities in Ogun state. The findings revealed that Undergraduate students accepts the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) adoption in Nigeria. The findings further showed that Undergraduate student agrees that there is a need to introduce a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) system in Nigeria. Although, some students are of the opinion that the results from the proposed examinations should not be a criterial for admission into postgraduate schools and job placement too. The findings further indicated based on the testing of hypothesis that level of study did not differ significantly in accepting the proposed objectives of unified Final Degree Examination (FDE) in Nigeria.

9. Recommendation

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should establish a Joint Graduation, Convocation and Certificate Board (JGCCB) as also opined by Ibanja (2015) to conduct a unified Final Degree Examination (FDE). Hence, it has been accepted in selected universities in Ogun State.
2. The examinations should be practical based, in line with the teaching curriculum
3. Discrepancies in universities e.g. "special" and "glorified secondary school" during job application and selection should be totally discouraged among job providers.
4. Educational Stakeholders like, JAMB, WAEC, NECO and NLS, should be consulted for consultations based on their success stories to drive this concept.

10. Suggestions for Further Studies

These findings cannot be generalized due to the sample size used in the study (280= 3 universities in Ogun State), hence further study should be done using a wider sample size.

There is also a great need get the views of major educational stakeholders in the country and lecturers, on how they perceive this evolving springboard that will savage the wailing educational standard in the country through the adoption of Joint Graduation, Convocation and Certificate Board (JGCCB).

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