

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN NECO AND WAEC ECONOMICS EXAMINATION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2018 IN JOS METROPOLIS, PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

This study examined students' performances in WAEC and NECO examinations in Jos metropolis of Plateau state, which was inferred on the Parameter in a Cross-Sectional survey design. The population of the study was all secondary schools in Jos metropolis of Plateau State accredited by WAEC and NECO, while fifteen schools were sampled for the study. The purposive sampling was used to select 1586 teachers and students used for the study. Two instruments were used for data collection; these were content analysis rubric and questionnaire. The data collected for the study was analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The research questions were answered using simple percentage, charts, graphs, mean, standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test for independent sample. The findings revealed among others that students performed better in NECO than WAEC; some of the factors responsible for differences in the performances of students in NECO and WAEC include: differences in Syllabus, WAEC marking guides are not simplified, non-standardization of question papers by experts, the inability of teachers to cover syllabus before the examinations, WAEC is not based on each country's culture, non-harmonization of Government policies on education, and students ill preparedness for examination. The test of hypotheses revealed that in 2014 and 2017 there was no significant difference in the performance means scores of economics students in both NECO and WAEC. However, there exist significant difference in the means scores of economics students in NECO and WAEC in 2015, 2016 and 2018. To solve these challenges, the study recommended: Syllabus harmonization; simplification of WAEC marking guides; standardization of all question papers by experts; Teachers should cover syllabus before the examinations; WAEC should consider each country's culture; harmonization of Government's policies on education; and Students should prepare for examination ahead of time.

Keywords: Comparative Analysis, WAEC, NECO, Examination and Performace

Introduction

Performance of candidates in examination especially secondary students is a veritable guide for ascertaining the success of educational policies and also serves as quality control for checking educational policies as contained in the curriculum. Educational assessment is therefore the totality of the processes involved in making valid judgments about what behavioral characteristics and changes a learner has acquired through the process of teaching and learning.

In spite of the above stated importance of assessments in education, the standard of these assessments becomes a thing of concern to stakeholders in the sector. Having in mind the fact that any scientifically identified fault may not entirely rest on the examination bodies but on all stakeholders in the education system. This concern informs the problem of this study which aims at finding out factors affecting the performance of students of economics in Nigeria both WAEC and NECO. If the two examination bodies uphold similar standards, then the performances of the same set of students in the two examinations should be significantly similar or insignificantly different.

Unfortunately, there have been outcries by scholars that performances of students in these examinations are low or poor especially in economics. Therefore, questioning the standards of these examinations. For example, Bandele and Adewale (2013) argued that NECO Examinations are the most difficult of the examinations being conducted by these examination bodies, while NABTEB examination is considered inferior to WAEC and NECO Examinations. On the other hand, a study by Omole in 2001 concluded that students' performed better in NECO than in WAEC examinations, which implies that NECO examination is less tasking hence, easily scaled through by candidate. In line with the forgoing, Adeniran (2000) hold that NECO is inferior to WAEC in all standards. However, these scholars did not place their findings in quantitative form for easy verification. On the other hand, Kolawole (2002) concluded that a given X grade in NECO mathematics test is equal to x + 1 grade in WAEC, meaning that WAEC is more difficult than NECO. However, it has been suggested that the general performance of candidates from Plateau state over the years in WAEC and NECO examinations have not been encouraging in spite of efforts made by government, missions and private individuals towards providing quality education in the state. As such, this research would examine and compares the performances of students in economics in both WAEC and NECO, using students' performance in Jos North LGA of Plateau state as means of ascertaining the standardization or otherwise of these examinations or other related factors responsible for the performance of students in Economics. In order to achieve this, it is important that an overview of the history of formal education in Nigeria be made.

Objectives

The examined and compared the performances of students in economics in both WAEC and NECO, using students' performance in Jos metropolis LGA of Plateau state as means of ascertaining the standardization or otherwise of these examination. However, the specific objectives were to:

- find out the performances of students in economics in WAEC from 2014 to 2018
- find out the performances of students in economics in NECO from 2014 to 2018
- examine the differences in the performance of students in WAEC and NECO examinations between 2014 and 2018
- find out the causes of the differences in the performance of students in economics between 2014 and 2018
- Find out how the differences can be minimized

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide the study.

1. What are the performances of students in economics in WAEC from 2014 to 2018 in Jos metropolis of Plateau state?
2. What are the performances of students in economics in NECO from 2014 to 2018 in Jos metropolis of Plateau state?
3. Are there differences in the performance of students in economics in WAEC and NECO examinations between 2014 and 2018 in Jos metropolis of Plateau state?
4. What are the causes of the differences in the performance of students in economics between 2014 and 2018 in Jos metropolis of Plateau state?
5. How can the differences in performance of students be minimized?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the performance of students in economics in WAEC and NECO between 2014 and 2018

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was cross sectional survey research design. Target population of the study consists of secondary school Economics students of 2014-2018 sessions in Jos metropolis of Plateau State. The sample size was made up of 1586 secondary school students and teachers of Economics. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the individual respondents. The instrument for data collection was a set of structured questionnaires which were drafted by the researcher and content analysis rubrics. Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of percentage, mean and standard deviation. The mean for each scaled response were calculated. This was done by adding the scales $1+2+3+4 = 10$, then divide by 4 to get the criterion mean of 2.50, this was used for the interpretation of some of the research questions. The hypotheses were tested with the use of t-test for independent sample under the probability of $p \leq 0.05$ as statistically significant level. All analysis was done with the aid of International Business Machine (IBM), statistical package for the Social Science (SPSS version 25).

Results

Table 1

Achievement Mean Scores of Students in Economics in WAEC from 2014-2018 in Jos North

Year	A	B	C	D	E	F	N	Mean	SD
2014	-	32	187	41	28	22	310	3.58	1.03
2015	-	-	40	75	121	74	310	2.26	.97
2016	-	32	231	35	9	3	310	3.90	.64
2017	-	63	163	59	20	5	310	3.84	.88
2018	1	48	137	87	26	11	310	3.61	.98

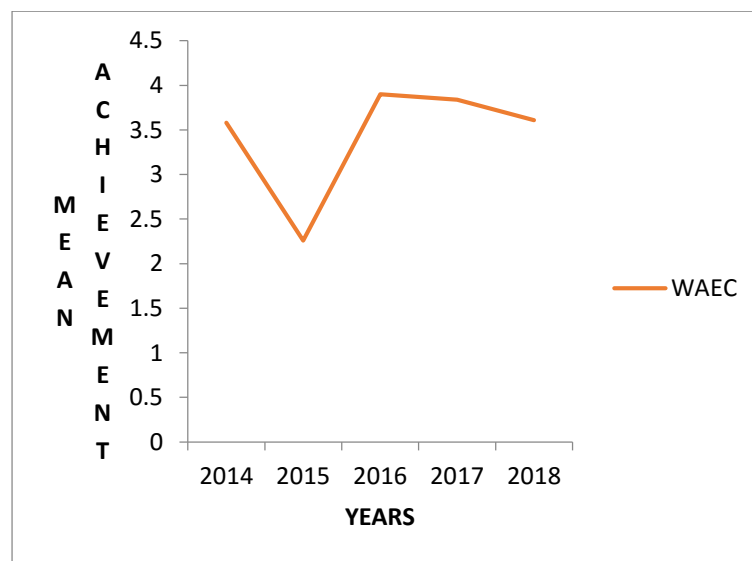


Figure 1: Line Graph on Achievement of Students in Economics in WAEC from 2014-2018

Table 1 shows the achievement mean scores of students in Economics in WAEC from 2014-2018 in Jos North Local Government area of Plateau State. From the result in 2014, 32 (10.3%) of the students scored 'B', 187(60.3%) scored 'C', 41 (13.2%) scored 'D', 28 (9%) scored 'E', while 22 (7.1%) scored 'F'. In 2015, 40 (12.9%) of the students scored 'C', 75(24.2%) scored 'D', 121(39%) got 'E', while 74 (23.9%) scored 'F' with a mean score of 2.26 indicating a lower achievement in 2015. Also, in 2016, 32(10.3%) of the students scored 'B', 231(74.5%) scored 'C', 35(11.3%) scored 'D', 9 (2.9%) scored 'E', while only 3(1%) scored 'F' with a mean achievement score of 3.90.

In 2017, 63(20.3%) of the students scored 'B', 163(52.6%) scored 'C', 59 (19%) scored 'D', 20 (6.5%) scored 'E' and 5(1.6%) scored 'F' with a mean score of 3.84. In 2018, 1(.3%) of the students scored 'A', 48(15.5%) scored 'B', 137 (44.2%) scored 'C', 87 (28.1%) scored 'D' 26(8.4%) scored 'E' and 11(3.5) % scored 'F', with a mean score of 3.61; this was further presented using a bar chart.

Furthermore, figure 1 show that in 2014, the mean achievement score was 3.58, it decreased to 2.26 in 2015, further eventually increased to 3.90 in 2016 and then dropped to 3.84 in 2017 and further dropped to 3.61 in 2018. Indicating that students' achievement was better in 2016 followed by 2017 then 2018, then 2014, the least was 2015. This means that the achievement of students increased at a point in time and decreased at another point in time, then increased and decreased again.

Table 2

Achievement of Students in Economics in NECO from 2014-2018 in Jos North

Year	A	B	C	D	E	F	N	Mean	SD
2014	-	2	189	80	20	19	310	3.44	.87
2015	-	42	243	14	9	2	310	4.01	.60
2016	5	65	221	11	7	1	310	4.15	.64
2017	-	27	254	18	8	3	310	3.95	.58
2018	1	43	223	19	21	3	310	3.92	.75

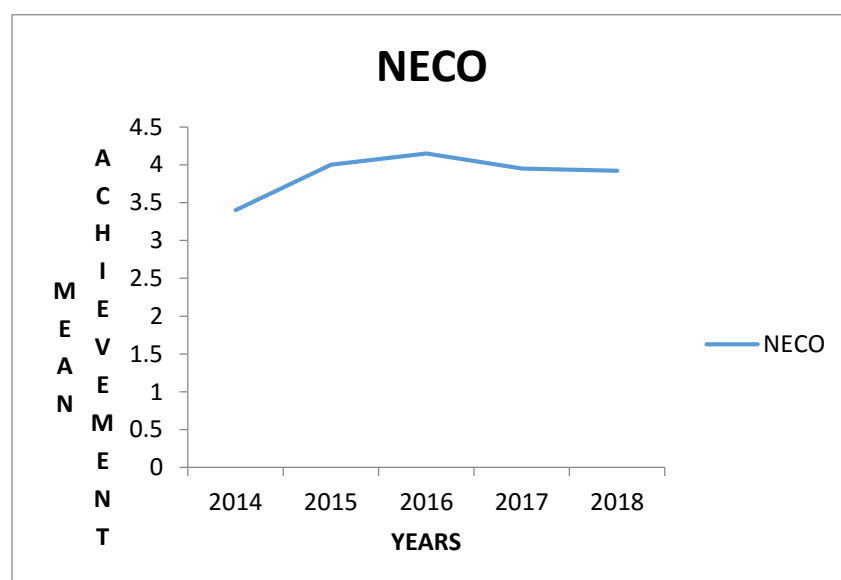


Figure 2: Line Graph on Achievement of Students in Economics in NECO from 2014-2018

Table 2 shows the achievement mean scores of students in Economics in NECO from 2014-2018 in Jos North Local Government area of Plateau State. From the result in 2014, 2 (.6%) of the students scored 'B', 189 (61%) of the students scored 'C', 80 (25.8%) scored 'D', 20 (6.5%) scored 'E', 19 (6%) scored 'F'. In 2015, 42 (13.5%) of the students scored 'B', 243 (78.4%) scored 'C', 14 (4.5%) scored 'D', 9 (2.9%) got 'E' while 2 (.6%) scored 'F'. Also, in 2016, 65 (21%) of the students scored 'B', 221 (71.3%) scored 'C', 11(3.5%) scored 'D', 9(2.3%) scored 'E' while 1(.3%) scored 'F'. In 2017, 27(8.7%) of the students scored 'B', 254 (81.9%) scored 'C', 18 (5.8%) scored 'D', 8 (2.6%) scored 'E' and 3(1%) scored 'F'. In 2018, 43(13.9%) of the students scored 'B', 223

(71.9%) of the students scored 'C', 19 (6.1%) scored 'D', 21(6.8%) scored 'E' and 3(1%) scored 'F9'; this was further presented using a bar chart.

Furthermore, figure 2 shows that in 2014, the mean achievement score was 3.44, it increased to 4.01 in 2015, further increased to 4.15 in 2016 and then dropped to 3.95 in 2017 and further dropped to 3.92 in 2018. Indicating that students' achievement was better in 2016 followed by 2015 then 2017, then 2018, the least was 2014. This means that the achievement of students in NECO increased at a point in time and decreased at another point in time.

Table 3

Difference in the Achievements Mean Scores of Students in Economics in WAEC and NECO Examinations between 2014 and 2018 in Jos North of Plateau State

Year	N	WAEC		NECO		$\bar{x}$ diff
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	
2014	310	3.58	1.03	3.44	.87	0.14
2015	310	2.26	.97	4.01	.60	1.75
2016	310	3.90	.64	4.15	.64	0.25
2017	310	3.84	.88	3.95	.58	0.11
2018	310	3.61	.98	3.92	.75	0.31
Cumulative means		3.44	0.9	3.89	0.69	0.45

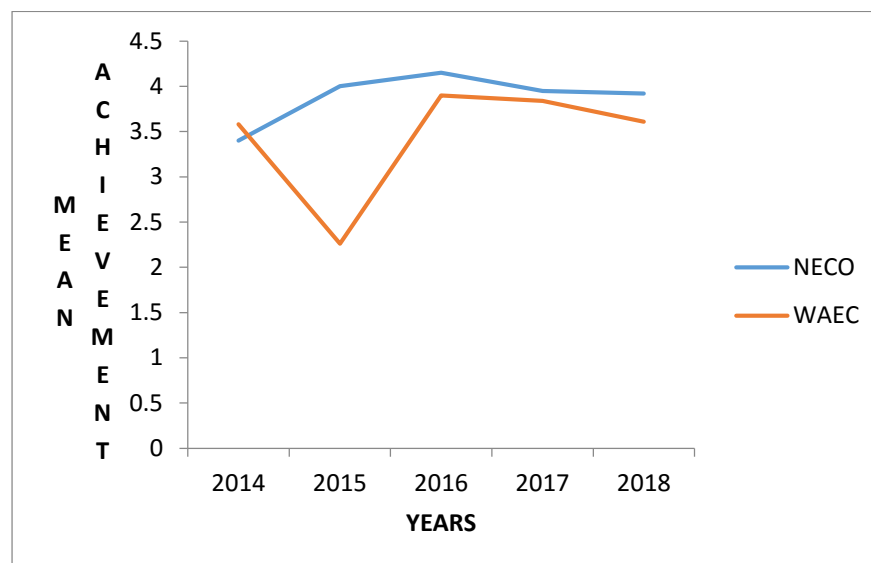


Figure 3: Line Graph on Difference in the Achievements Mean Scores of Students in Economics in WAEC and NECO Examinations between 2014 and 2018

The achievement mean score for WAEC 2014($\bar{x}$ = 3.44 SD = .87) lower than the mean score for NECO ($\bar{x}$ = 3.58, SD = 1.03) with a mean difference of 0.14 in favour of WAEC. In 2015, the mean score for NECO ($\bar{x}$ = 4.01, SD = .60) was higher than that of WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 2.26, SD= .97) with a mean difference of 1.75. Also, in 2016, the mean score for NECO ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15, SD = .64) is higher than that of WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.90, SD = .64) with a mean difference of 0.25. In 2017, the mean score of NECO ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95, SD = .58) is higher than that of WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.84, SD = .88) with a mean difference of 0.11. In 2018, the mean score of NECO ($\bar{x}$ = 3.92, SD = .75) is higher than that of WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.61, SD = .98) with a mean difference of 0.31.

Generally, the cumulative mean for WAEC is 3.44 as against that of NECO which is 3.89 with a mean difference of 0.45 in favour of NECO. This implies that Economics students performed better in NECO than WAEC. Figure – shows the difference in the mean scores between WAEC and NECO from 2014- 2018. From the graph, it shows that the mean score for WAEC was higher than that of NECO in 2014, but subsequently the mean scores for NECO from 2015 - 2018 became better than WAEC.

Table 4
Mean Result on Causes of Differences in the Achievement of Economics Students in WAEC and NECO between 2014 and 2018 in Jos North of Plateau State

S/N	Causes of Differences	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Different syllabus	36	1.89	.667	Not a cause
2	Students work harder to make sure they make up for whatever shortfalls they might have noticed during WAEC.	36	3.83	.383	Cause
3	Marking guide for NECO is simpler	36	2.81	1.04	Cause
4	Level of preparation	36	3.56	.05	Cause
5	Nature of question paper	36	3.50	.61	Cause
6	NECO is based on Nigerian culture unlike WAEC	36	3.89	.32	Cause
7	Teachers inability to cover syllabus	36	3.83	.38	Cause
8	Time frame for the examinations	36	3.72	.45	Cause
9	Examination malpractice	36	2.86	.83	Cause
Criterion Mean: 2.50			Cumulative Mean: 3.32		

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation result on the causes of differences in the achievement between 2014 and 2018 in Jos North of Plateau State. From the result, items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 have their mean scores ($\bar{x}$ 1, = 3.83, 2.8, 3.56, 3.50, 3.89, 3.83, 3.72 & 2.86) above the criterion mean of 2.50. Only item 1 has a mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 1.89) below the criterion mean, indicating that WAEC and NECO does not have different syllabus, but since the cumulative mean of 3.32 is above the criterion mean it implies that the statements which says that Students work harder to make sure they make up for whatever shortfalls they might have noticed during WAEC. Marking guide for NECO is simpler, Level of preparation, Nature of question paper, NECO is based on Nigerian culture unlike WAEC, Teachers inability to cover syllabus, Time frame for the examinations and Examination malpractices are causes of the differences in the achievement between 2014 and 2018 in Jos North of Plateau State.

Table 5

Mean score Result on how to minimize the Causes of Differences in WAEC and NECO between 2014 1nd 2018

S/N	How to Minimize	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Syllabus should be harmonized	36	4.00	.00	Minimize
2	WAEC marking guides should be looked into to simplify it	36	3.56	.50	Minimize
3	All question papers should be well standardized by experts	36	4.00	.00	Minimize
4	Teachers should try and cover syllabus before the examinations	36	3.28	.45	Minimize
5	WAEC should be based on each country's culture	36	3.22	.42	Minimize
6	Government policies on education should be harmonized	36	4.00	.00	Minimize
7	Students should prepare for examination ahead of time to avoid low level of preparedness	36	3.89	.32	Minimize

Table 5 shows the mean and standard deviation result on how to minimize the causes of differences in the WAEC and NECO achievement between 2014 and 2018 in Jos North of Plateau State. From the result, all the items have their mean scores ($\bar{x}$ =4.00, 3.56, 4.00, 3.28,, 3.22, 4.00 & 3.89) above the criterion mean of 2.50 and since the cumulative mean of 3.32 is above the criterion mean it implies to minimize the causes of differences, Syllabus should be harmonized, WAEC marking guides should be looked into to simplify it, All question papers should be well standardized by experts, Teachers should try and cover syllabus before the examinations, WAEC should be based on each country's culture, Government policies on education should be harmonized, and students should prepare for examination ahead of time to avoid low level of preparedness.

Table 6

Summary t-test result on the Difference between WAEC and NECO Achievement Mean Scores of Students in Economics from 2014 to 2018 Academic Session

Year	EXAMINATION	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t	p-value	Decision
2014	WAEC	310	3.58	1.03	618	-1.85	.064	Insignificant
	NECO	310	3.44	.87				
2015	WAEC	310	4.01	.60	618	27.18	.000	Significant
	NECO	310	2.26	.97				
2016	WAEC	310	3.90	.64	618	4.83	.000	Significant
	NECO	310	4.15	.64				
	WAEC	310	3.84	.88				

2017					618	1.89	.06	Insignificant
	NECO	310	3.95	.58				
	WAEC	310	3.61	.98				
2018					618	4.47	.000	Significant
	NECO	310	3.92	.75				

The t-test for independent sample was used to determine if a significant difference exists in the mean score of Economics students in WAEC and NECO from 2014 to 2018. The mean score for 2014 WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.58, SD = 1.03) is almost same with that of NECO, Economics students ($\bar{x}$ = 3.44, SD = .87). Also the result yielded $t(618) = -1.85$, $P > 0.05$ since the P value of .064 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was retained, it was concluded that there is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores between WAEC and NECO Economics students in 2014 academic session.

The mean score for 2015 WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 2.26, SD = .97) is lower than that of NECO, Economics students ($\bar{x}$ = 4.01, SD = .60). Also the result yielded $t(618) = 27.18$, $P < 0.05$ since the P value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected, it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean score between WAEC and NECO achievement mean scores of students in Economics in 2015 academic session. In 2016 the mean score for WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.90, SD = .64) is lower than that of NECO, Economics students ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15, SD = .64). Also the result yielded $t(618) = 4.83$, $P < 0.05$ since the P value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected, it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores between WAEC and NECO Economics students in 2016 academic session.

Furthermore, the WAEC mean score for 2017 ($\bar{x}$ = 3.84, SD = .88) is almost same with that of NECO ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95, SD = .58). Also the result yielded $t(618) = -1.89$, $P > 0.05$ since the P value of .060 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was retained, it was concluded that there is no significant difference in the achievement mean score between WAEC and NECO in Economics in 2017 academic session. In 2018 the mean score for WAEC ($\bar{x}$ = 3.61, SD = .98) is lower than that of NECO, Economics students ($\bar{x}$ = 3.92, SD = .75). Also the result yielded $t(618) = 4.47$, $P < 0.05$ since the P value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected, it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the achievement mean scores between WAEC and NECO Economics students in 2018 academic session.

Discussion

This study discovered that Economics students performed better in NECO than WAEC. This may not be unconnected from the fact that while the NECO examination questions were set based on the culture and general philosophy of education with regard to the culture of Nigerian students; same cannot be said concerning WAEC due to variant culture and distinctive philosophy of education of member countries.

This study identified the fact that some of the factors responsible for differences in the performances of students in NECO and WAEC include: differences in NECO and WAEC

Syllabus, this has contributed to the inability of teachers to effectively facilitate the teaching of economics as well as students easy comprehension of the subject; WAEC marking guides are not simplified thereby making it difficult for students to pass. This accounts for the rate of failure recorded in WAEC examinations over the years; non standardization of question papers by experts, the inability of teachers to cover syllabus before the examinations. The immediate outcome of this is that examination questions are set from areas which have not been taught to students by their teachers, thus leading to high rate of low achievement by students; WAEC is not based on each country's culture. This has greatly negated the philosophy in education which holds that learning proceeds from the known to the unknown; nonharmonization of Government policies on education. This has bred a whole of confusion as to what should or should not be with regards to teaching and learning; students' ill preparedness for examination. The implication of this is that only those who go the extra mile through personal or self-learning as well as engagement of private tutors or extra lessons would most likely excel in examinations, this also correlate with the economic condition of parents in order to provide the needed fund that would make this possible.

The study in verifying the extent to which students performance in economics varies significantly or otherwise in examinations conducted by both NECO and WAEC for the period understudy, carried out the test of hypotheses in order to determine how significant or insignificant the differences might be. It was discovered that in 2014 and 2017 there was no significant difference in the means scores of economics students in both NECO and WAEC. However, there existed significant difference in the means scores of economics students in NECO and WAEC in 2015, 2016 and 2018. These differences in the mean scores of students in these examinations over this period are attributed to the identifiable factors which have been mentioned earlier.

Conclusion

As important as economics is to humanity and the existence of the society as a whole, it is non-questionable the fact that ill managed economic system spells doom to the society. As such, the place of economics as a subject of teaching and learning cannot be relegated to the background. Unfortunately, it has been discovered that students do not perform credibly in this all important subject that holds the society together.

It must be said that students are not entirely to blame for this low rate of performances, due to the fact that teachers also do not cover expected syllabus for these examinations hence, making students ill- prepared. On the other hand, examination bodies have their fair share of the blame for how they go about conducting these examinations, not minding the fact that the syllabus for these examinations are some worth bloated. Government has not also been very helpful as their inability to harmonize educational policies has significant implications on teaching and learning at all levels of education which by and large affects the performance of students in various subjects including economics. If the performance of students most change positively and remain so, the identified factors responsible for poor performances in examinations but be effectively and efficiently manage.

Recommendations

To minimize the causes of differences in students' performance in NECO and WAEC examinations this study recommends that:

- Syllabus should be harmonized. This will go a long way in easing the beclouded confusion faced by teachers of various subjects particularly Economics teachers. These way teachers would be proficient in facilitating learning which will by and large be beneficial to students and in turn, bring about better performance of students in examinations, be it NECO or WAEC.
- All question papers should be well standardized by experts. This will go a long way in removing ambiguity which brings about cognitive dissonance on students. By so doing, students will be properly focused as what and what is not expected of them by the examiners as the practice of trial and error by students during examinations would be reduced to the barest minimum.
- Teachers should try and cover syllabus before the examinations. This is important because ill-properly trained or half-baked students would certainly find it difficult to attain their maximum potential in their chosen endeavor. More so the inability of teachers to cover syllabus before the examinations is one of the easy ways to failures in examinations by students. Most importantly, students' achievement is a very quick means of assessing the quality and intellectual strength of their teachers. Therefore it is important that teachers do all within their means to cover subject syllabus before their students goes in for their examinations.

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