
PREDICTIVE VALIDITY OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' QUALIFYING EXAMINATION SCORES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessed the predictive validity of predictive validity of senior secondary school students' qualifying examination scores in English Language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance area of Katsina State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population consisted of 4,796 Senior Secondary School Three (SSS3) students who took the qualifying English Language examinations in 2019 and 2020, as well as the NECO SSC English examinations in 2020 and 2021. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 524 students for the study. Data were collected using proforma. Frequencies and percentages were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test Hypothesis 1 and t-tests were employed to test Hypotheses 2 and 3. Findings of the study showed that there was a significant positive relationship between students' performance in the 2019 qualifying examination and the 2020 SSCE English Language examinations. Also, a significant difference was observed between male and female students' performance in the 2020 qualifying examination ($t = 3.687$; $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that qualifying examination scores in English Language can serve as valid predictors of students' performance in the NECO SSC English examination. It was recommended that students should take both the qualifying and SSCE examinations seriously and approach them with equal commitment.

Keywords: SSCE, Performance, Predictive Validity, Qualifying Examination.

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Introduction

Assessment is the process of gathering information for the purpose of decision-making. It involves the collection of information about individual's knowledge, skills, attitude, judgment, interpretation and using the data for taking relevant decision about the individual, instructional process, curriculum or programme. Assessment plays a crucial role in the school system especially in teaching and learning process. Without assessment teachers cannot discover the areas of strengths and weaknesses of their students and the extent of which teaching objectives have been achieved (Olutola, 2016). It also facilitates the achievement of certain standard. This is one of the reasons why government in all levels nationwide support examinations system to assess the ability of students for the next level of education (Onuka & Junaid, 2010). Assessment in education can be internal where schools conducts examinations as yardstick for assessment and teacher carry out a routine evaluation of school learning to achieve various objectives and students get

the mark and the feedback regarding the assessment (Olutola, 2015). This internal evaluation goes by such names as teacher made test (TMT), continuous assessment (CA), school based-assessment (SBA) and local test (Olutola, 2015). External assessment on the other hand includes Junior School Certificate Examination conducted by the respective state Ministry of Education in case of state schools and National Examinations Council (NECO) in case of Federal Government Unity Junior Secondary School programme and Senior School Certificates Examinations are conducted by West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO).

Qualifying examination is an examination that all students basically SSII students in their third term must write before such a student will be allow to sit for any certificate examinations such as SSCE. This examination is known as qualifying examinations and was introduce in 2015 in Katsina State by then the Governor Aminu Bello Masari. The examination (qualifying) was introduced in the state in order to encourage candidate(s) to perform better in SSCE and to keep the tradition of free education in the state. However, this study was designed to examine the relationship between students' performance in qualifying examinations and SSCE in English language in Dutsin-Ma Educational Zonal Area, (Dutsin-Ma & Kurfi Local Government Area) Kastina State, Nigeria.

Examination is a set of questions or exercises testing the knowledge or skills of an individual or group of individuals. Without examination determining student's position based on their level of ability will be difficult. Furthermore, National Examinations Council (NECO) is an examination body in Nigeria that conducts the senior secondary certificate examination and the general certificate in education in June/July and December/January respectively. It was formed in April 1999 by head of state Abdulsammi Abubakar. It was the first federal organization to offer subsidized registration to academic candidates in Nigeria. NECO was mandated to take over the responsibilities of National Board of Examination Measurement (NBEM) (Olutola, 2016). The body, examines students' performance on the school subjects such as English language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Economics, Government, Commerce, and lots more.

English language as a core subject cannot be escaped by any Nigeria student throughout the student academic journey irrespective of career the student is pursuing (Victoria & Bashiru, 2019). Therefore, English language is not just a core subject in Nigeria school's curriculum and or a prerequisite for getting admission into any tertiary institution but a vital vehicle for learning all other subjects and an official language employed as inter and intra-national language in Nigeria. (Olutola & Nini, 2020). Therefore, this study aims at determining if students' performance in English language Qualifying examination will serve as a predictor of their performance in SSCE English Language.

Several researchers have carried out studies on predictive validity of students' achievement in internal and external examinations. Awodun, Olasola, and Oyeniyi, (2013) found that the three factors (Mock result, Continuous Assessment and Gender) made significance relative contribution to Physics students' achievement in SSCE. In addition, Adesoji and Kenni, (2013) investigated continuous assessment, mock results and gender as predictors of academic performance of chemistry students in WASSCE and NECO examinations in Ekiti state. The result of their study revealed that the three factors CA scores, mock results and gender made significant relative contribution to Chemistry students' academic performance in WASSCE. None of the researchers investigated predictive validity of students' Qualifying examinations grades in English language and their NECO grades in senior secondary schools in Katsina state. These create a gap which this study tends to fill.

However, from the various factors viewed by different researchers, it is clear to understand that lack of instructional materials, lack of evaluation techniques during teaching and learning of English language, unqualified teachers teaching English language, students' poor study habit to get ready for examinations,

social media addiction by the students and mother tongue interference may also contribute to poor performance in English language.

Many researchers have been searching for lasting solution to the failure of students in English language in both internal and external examinations (Olutola, Olatoye & Owolabi, 2018) but not much of them have made attempt to correlate Qualifying examination grades in English language and NECO grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma zonal educational quality assurance. Therefore, this study was designed to find out whether qualifying examinations grades in English language is a good predictor of students' performance in English language SSCE in Dutsin-Ma zonal education quality assurance of Katsina State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

There is alarming growing concern regarding students' poor performance and proficiency in English language. English language, a core subject essential for further education and societal participation in Nigeria. Multiple studies have attributed poor performance in English Language to a range of systemic and pedagogical issues. These include the ineffective use of evaluation techniques during the teaching-learning process (Ibe & Ekpo, 2013), the prevalence of unqualified teachers handling English Language classes (Ukeje, Akabogu, & Ndu, 2016), and students' poor study habits and lack of preparedness for examinations (Achor, Kurumeh, & Orokpo, 2012). Other contributing factors include addiction to social media, which distracts students from academic work (Okoye & Nwafor, 2020), and mother tongue interference, which hinders the acquisition of correct English syntax and phonology (Adebayo, 2015).

Furthermore, the widespread failure in English Language examinations has sparked intense debate among stakeholders, including educators, parents, policymakers, and examination bodies. The National Examinations Council (NECO, 2011) reported that various stakeholders attribute blame to different causes, including government neglect, parental indifference, teacher inefficiency, student attitudes, and broader societal influences. This is particularly troubling considering that a credit pass in English Language is a compulsory prerequisite for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria (JAMB, 2020). Scholars such as Okwu and Orum (2012) have investigated the factors responsible for students' underachievement in English Language, noting that poor foundational skills, ineffective teaching strategies, and lack of motivation significantly affect outcomes. More recently, attention has shifted toward evaluating whether performance in internal qualifying examinations can serve as a predictor of success in standardized assessments such as the NECO SSCE. This approach is grounded in the concept of predictive validity, which assesses the extent to which performance on one measure forecasts performance on another.

In light of these concerns, this study seeks to examine whether students' performance in qualifying examinations can reliably predict their achievement in the NECO Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in English Language.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the predictive validity of senior secondary school students qualifying examinations' scores in English Language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance of Katsina State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to find out the:

- i. nature of 2019 students' qualifying examination grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina state.
- ii. nature of 2020 students' qualifying examination grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance.

- iii. relationship between students' performance in 2019 qualifying and 2020 SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.
- iv. difference in the male and female students' performance in 2019 qualifying English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.
- v. difference in the male and female students' performance in 2020 SSCE English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Research Questions

The following questions were asked to guide the study;

- i. What is the nature of 2019 students' qualifying examination grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina state?
- ii. What is the nature of 2020 students' qualifying examination grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho¹: There is no significant relationship between students' performance in 2019 qualifying and 2020 SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Ho²: There is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2019 qualifying English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Ho³: There is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2020 SSCE English Language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Methodology

The study employed a correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' performance in English Language qualifying examinations and their performance in the NECO Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State. The population comprised 4,796 Senior Secondary School Three (SSS3) students who sat for the English Language qualifying examinations in 2019 and 2020, and the SSCE English Language examinations in 2020 and 2021.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select six secondary schools, four from Dutsin-Ma L.G.A and two from Kurfi LGA. A total of 524 students formed the sample, consisting specifically of students who sat for the 2019 qualifying examination and the 2020 SSCE and students who sat for the 2020 qualifying examination and the 2021 NECO SSCE. No standardized test instrument was developed or adopted for data collection. Instead, the researcher utilized Marks Collection Forms (MCFs), which served as proformas to gather students' results. Two MCFs were used for data collection. MCF 1 was used to collect data of students who sat for the 2019 qualifying exam and 2020 SSCE and MCF 2 was used to collect data of students who sat for the 2020 qualifying exam and 2021 NECO SSCE.

Each form included the following columns: serial number, gender, school form, qualifying examination grade, and SSCE grade. To ensure face and content validity, the data collection forms were reviewed by

Educational Measurement and Evaluation experts. Their input ensured that the MCFs captured data relevant to the study objectives. No formal reliability test was conducted, as the study did not involve the development or adoption of a typical psychometric instrument. However, the data were considered accurate, dependable, and consistent as they were drawn from standardized examination records.

The conversion table used for Students' English language Qualifying Examination Grade is shown below.

Table 1: Grade Weight of Students English Language Qualifying Examination

S/N	Grade	Grade Weight
1	A	3
2	C	2
3	D	1
4	F	0

Table 2: Grade Weight of Students SSCE English language examination

S/N	Grade	Grade weight
1	A ₁	8
2	B ₂	7
3	B ₃	6
4	C ₄	5
5	C ₅	4
6	C ₆	3
7	D ₇	2
8	E ₈	1
9	F ₉	0

In administering the instruments, the researcher went to each of the selected schools with the introduction letter collected from the Department to seek the permission of the school authorities. Date was fixed for the collection of the data. Researcher personally collected the data from each of the school selected for the study, this gave the researcher opportunity to answer relevant questions that students and school authority asked the researcher.

Frequency and percentage were used to answer the two research questions in the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze hypotheses one (1) while independent t-test was used to analyze hypotheses two (2) and three (3). The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the nature of 2019 students' qualifying examination grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina?

Table 3: 2019 Students' Qualifying Examination Grades in English Language

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
A	13	5.1
C	164	64.6
D	77	30.3
F	0	0
Total	254	100

Table 3 shows that in 2019 students' qualifying examination grades in in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina, 13 (5.1%) students sampled had A, 164 (64.6%) students sampled had C, 77 (30.3%) students sampled had D and 0 (0%) students sampled had F. Thus, majority of the students who sat for 2019 qualifying examination English language passed at grade C, 164 (64.6%).

Research Question Two: What is the nature of 2020 students' NECO SSCE grades in English Language in senior secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State?

Table 4: 2020 Students' SSCE Grades in English Language

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
A1	0	0
B2	0	0
B3	0	0
C4	2	0.8
C5	73	28.7
C6	64	25.2
D7	68	26.8
E8	37	14.6
F9	10	3.9
Total	254	100

Table 4 shows that in 2020 students' SSCE grades in English language in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina, and no students had A1, B2 and B3 from the sampled students. 2 (0.8%) students had C4, 73 (28.7%) students had C5, 64 (25.2%) students had C6, 68 (26.8) students had D7, 37 (14.6%) students had E8 and 10 (3.9%) students had F9; Thus, majority of the students who sat for 2020 NECO English language passed at grade C5,73 (28.7).

Testing of Hypotheses

In this study, three (3) hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The statistical tools used by the researcher to analyze the three (3) hypotheses were Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-test.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between students' performance in 2019 qualifying and 2020 NECO SSC English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of Students' Performance in 2019 Qualifying and 2020 NECOSSC English Language Examinations

Variable	PC, Sig. of R. & N.	2019 Qualifying Examination	2020 NECOSSC Examination
2019 Qualifying Examination	Pearson Correlation	1	.280**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	254	254
2020 NECO SSC Examination	Pearson Correlation	.280**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	254	254

** means correlation is significant at the 0.05 alpha level (2-tailed)

Table 5 reveals r - value of 0.280**, which is significant at 0.05 alpha levels, ($r = 0.280^{**}$; $P < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between students' performance in 2019 qualifying and 2020 SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State is rejected. This means that there is low significant relationship ($r = 0.280^{**}$) between students' performance in 2019 qualifying examination and 2020 NECO SSC English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State. Thus, students' performance in 2019 qualifying English language examination is a good predictor of their performance in 2020 NECO SSC English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2019 qualifying English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Table 6: t-test Analysis of Male and Female Students' Performance in 2019 Qualifying English Language Examination

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Sig-value	Remark
Male	91	1.8132	.61305	252	1.439	.151	Not Significant
Female	163	1.7117	.49346				

Significant: ($P > 0.05$)

Table 6 shows calculated t-value of 1.439 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = 1.439$; $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2019 qualifying English Language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State is accepted.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2020 NECO/SSC English Language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State.

Table 7: t-test Summary Table Showing the Difference in the Male and Female Students' Performance in 2020 NECO/SSC English Language examination

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Sig-value	Remark
Male	91	2.6923	.83921	252	.669	.504	Not Significant
Female	163	2.5890	1.33208				

Significant: ($P > 0.05$)

Table 7 shows calculated t-value of .669 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = .669$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2020 NECO/SSC English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance, Katsina State is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The finding in research question one revealed that majority of the students who sat for 2019 qualifying examination in English language passed at grade C, with frequency of 164 representing (64.6%). This disagree with Sardauna (2020) findings that, in 2014 only 30 per cent of sponsored candidates were able to obtained five and credit and above in WAEC 46 per cent in NECO in 2015.

The finding in research question two showed that majority of the students who sat for 2020 NECO English language passed at grade C5, with frequency of 73 representing (28.7%). Thus, no student had A1, B2 and B3 from the sample students. This implies that 2019 qualifying examination is a good predictor of students' performance in 2020 NECO/SSC English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Zonal Education Quality Assurance. Thus, this finding agreed with Amdioha & Uko (2019) that mock result significantly predicted Agricultural academic performance of candidates in WASSCE in Ekot Ekpene senatorial district of Awka, Anambra State.

The findings in hypothesis one showed that there is significant relationship between students' performance in 2019 qualifying and 2020 SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. This implies that, students' performance in 2019 qualifying English language examination is a good predictor of their performance in 2020 SSCE English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. The finding of this study is in conformity with the findings of Madu and Eberé (2016) that the performance of students in mock examinations is an important indicator or factor that relate to the performance of a student in an external senior school certificate examination.

The findings in hypothesis two indicated that there is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2019 qualifying English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. The findings is not in agreement with the finding of Olutola (2016) which indicated that female students performed significantly better than male students in WASSCE multiple choice Biology test. Also, female students had a higher mean (25.24) and a higher standard deviation (15.15) than the mean (19.33) and standard deviation (9.81) for the male students.

The findings in hypothesis three showed that, there is no significant difference in the male and female students' performance in 2020 SSCE English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. Thus, students' academic performance in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State are not significantly different in 2020 SSCE English language examination based on gender. The findings is supported by the finding of Olutola and Nini (2020) which reported no significant difference between male and female students' academic performance in NECO English Language examinations in Jos-South, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The researcher investigated the assessment of senior secondary school students' performance in qualifying examination and National Examinations Council English language examination in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone Katsina State, Nigeria. The relevance of this study is to determine if there is correlation between students' performance in qualifying examinations and NECO SSC English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. Also, to determine if the significant differences exist in the students' performance in qualifying examinations and SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone based on gender.

This research identifies and establishes the relationships between students' performance in qualifying and SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. Besides, the impact of gender on students' performance in qualifying and SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State was also established. The results of the findings show that there is significant relationship between students' performance in 2019 qualifying and 2020 SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State and there is significant relationship between students' performance in 2020 qualifying and 2021SSCE English language examinations in Dutsin-Ma Education Quality Assurance Zone, Katsina State. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that students' performance in qualifying English language examination is a good predictor of students' performance in SSCE examinations. Also, the findings give a clear indication to motivate both the male and female gender to have more interest in studying English language the more since there is no significant difference in the students' performance in SSCE English language subjects based on gender.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Qualifying examinations should undergo proper standardization processes. This will ensure a better alignment with SSCE standards, thereby improving their predictive capacity and enhancing the credibility of student performance assessments.
2. Students should take both the qualifying and SSCE examinations serious and approach them with equal commitment.
3. Teachers should encourage and support students to prepare adequately for both the qualifying and SSCE examinations.
4. School administrations should coordinate with teachers to complete the curriculum before the qualifying examinations.
5. Educational measurement and evaluation experts in State Ministry of Education should ensure that qualifying examinations are well-designed and aligned with the SSCE curriculum to enhance predictive validity.

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