Do pre-entry tests predict competencies required to excel academically in law school?

An empirical investigation

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Abstract

Purpose – Prospective students of law are required to demonstrate competence in certain disciplines to attain admission to law school. The grounding in the disciplines is expected to demonstrate competencies required to excel academically in law school. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relevance of the law school admission test to predicting the competencies.

Design/methodology/approach – The assessment is based on administrative records of 815 students admitted at Makerere University's law school on the basis of their performance in the test. Grades obtained in advanced level (A-Level) of secondary education subjects, namely, literature, history, divinity and economics, were adopted as a measure of competence in the disciplines. The outcome of the test was modeled by performance of enrollees in the subject, their characteristics (gender, nationality, entry scheme and academic qualifications at enrollment) and first-year grade point average using a quantile regression.

Findings – With the exception of enrollees' characteristics, no significant variations in the outcome of the test were noted in the results between students who did not do the subjects at the A-Level and those who obtained Grade A ($p > 0.05$). Similar findings in performance were noted between students who obtained Grade A and those with other grades in the disciplines.

Research limitations/implications – The findings confirm that admission tests to law school are a measure of mental rather than educational or academic ability. However, the results may not be applied to candidates in countries where a bachelor's degree is a requirement for admission to law school.

Originality/value – The study provides an empirical investigation of whether the admission test to law school predicts competencies required to excel academically in the undergraduate program.

Keywords Performance, Higher education, Undergraduates, Quality evaluation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Prospective students of law are required to possess certain skills that would enable them excel academically in law school. The requirements for admission to law school in various academic and/or related institutions demonstrate this argument. For example, the requirements for admission to law school at the University of Texas (UTSA) stipulate that enrollees should demonstrate competence in four major areas:

(1) *Communication*: Writing in English, critical proficiency in oral and graphical communication as well as ability to identify, formulate problems and draw conclusions.

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(2) *Conceptual approaches and history of arts*: Ability to comprehend factual concepts and human creativity.

(3) Political and economic dimensions of a society.

(4) Cultural diversity, including nature as well as limits of knowledge and academic fields (UTSA, 2012).

The guidelines according to the Alabama State Bar, an association of lawyers in the USA, do not show otherwise with regard to the competencies. Their emphasis is made to grounding of enrollees in analytical writing, English and literature, political science, economics and accounting, history, philosophy, logic, scientific methods and public speaking (Alabama State Bar, 2013). Literature elsewhere (John Hopkins University, 2013; Nalukenge *et al.* 2014; University of Canterbury, 2013) affirms the relevance of these disciplines in demonstrating competencies required by prospective students of law. While the parenting handbook of John Hopkins University stipulates that competence in the disciplines such as economics, history, political thoughts and mathematics provides a basis for knowledge in resolving disputes, Nalukenge *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that competence in history, divinity and literature predicts academic achievement in law school. However, the guidelines for admission at the University of Canterbury stipulate that enrollees with science, mathematics, music or art background can only succeed in law school if they possess good language and writing skills (University of Canterbury, 2013). Indeed, a more recent study undertaken in Uganda documents that competence in literature undertaken at the advanced level (A-Level) of secondary education has been associated with high academic achievement in law school (Nalukenge *et al.*, 2014).

Other than the academic achievement, these competencies provide insights into professional skills required for lawyer effectiveness. In citing Shultz and Zedeck (2003), Shultz and Zedeck (2011) present writing, speaking, analysis and reasoning, problem-solving, ability to see the world through the eyes of others and fact-finding as some of the factors important for lawyer effectiveness. These aspects are to a great extent in-line with the competencies required by prospective students of law. Therefore, it would not be a surprise to conclude that grounding in the disciplines associated with the proficiencies of studying law demonstrates competencies required for lawyer effectiveness.

On one hand, the grounding for these competencies is assumed to be obtained from enrollees' prior studies (Nalukenge *et al.* 2014; Wamala, 2013; UTSA, 2012). On the other hand, the relevance of prior studies in demonstrating competencies required by prospective students of law to excel academically is questioned (Emedot, 2011; Makerere University, 2011). It is from this background therefore that admission tests were introduced as a measure of assessing the aforementioned competencies among candidates to law school. Although a pooled index of the academic achievement of enrollees in their prior studies – usually A-Level of secondary education – is a requirement for undertaking the test, admission to law school is mainly determined by the outcome of the test. A questionable aspect, however, is whether the test predicts competencies required to excel academically in law school. This study provides an understanding of this issue using the disciplines identified with the aforementioned competencies of studying law. Particularly, this study investigates whether the

admission test predicts performance of enrollees in the disciplines undertaken in their prior studies.

Overview of law school admission tests

The idea of administering admission tests for consideration to law school goes way back to the early 2000s in the UK with the introduction of The National Admissions Test for Law (LNAT). The LNAT, developed in 2004, is viewed by many academic and related institutions as an essential part of admission to a Bachelor of Laws (LLB; LNAT Consortium, 2010). The main objective of the test is to assess verbal reasoning skills of prospective students of law rather than their educational or academic ability. Verbal reasoning skills comprise aspects such as comprehension, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction. However, to provide a more accurate and rounded impression of a candidate's abilities, the admission guidelines according to LNAT Consortium stipulate that the outcome of the test should be considered alongside standard methods of selecting students for consideration to undergraduate programs. Methods of selection comprise, but are not limited to, A-Level of secondary education results, university applications and admission interviews. Contrary to other academic endeavors, the admission test cannot be revised, although prospective students of law could benefit from familiarizing themselves with the format of the test.

Similar to the LNAT, The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is an admission test given to prospective students of law in the USA, Canada, China, Armenia, Hungary, India and Australia (Law School Admission Council, 2013). The objective of administering the test is to "provide some check upon the validity of enrollees' attainment in prior studies and to furnish a common denominator of educative promise" (Law School Admission Council, 2001, p. 1). Specifically, the test is intended to assess competence in four major areas:

(1) *Logical reasoning*: Candidate's ability to dissect and analyze arguments.

(2) *Reading compression*: Relates to law, arts and humanities, physical sciences and/or social sciences.

(3) *Analytical reading*: Ability to analyze a range of possibilities embedded in a set of rules.

(4) *Writing sample*: Requires the candidates to write an essay favoring one of the two options that require a decision to be made.

The content and scoring of the LSAT and LNAT are ideally similar, although the structuring of the tests may differ. Although the use of standardized tests goes way back to the mid-1920s, the LSAT – a collective measure for determining the competence of candidates to law school in the USA – was first administered in 1948 (Law School Admission Council, 2001). Similar to the requirements for admission in the UK, the outcome of the LSAT is assessed alongside prior academic achievement of enrollees – usually undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) – for consideration to law school. In affirming to the relevance of enrollees' academic achievement in prior studies, the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) in the USA writes: "all those who discussed these tests in print, however, acknowledged that they were not and neither could nor should, be the sole criteria by which admissions decisions were made" (Law School Admission

Council, 2001, p. 2). Further, the LSAC cites Henry Witham of the University of Tennessee in the argument of poor performance of law school students who do poorly on the test. Witham affirms that the predictive value of the test should be assessed alongside a candidate's desire and ability to work. Applicants' under-ability to work is explained, according to LSAC, by:

> [. . .] health and prior education, work outside of law school such as newspaper work, college annual, college sports, social activities, and any number of outside distractions which might claim the student's time and thought. A student has ability to work in direct proportion to perfect health and prior education and in inverse proportion to his interest in outside distractions (Law School Admission Council, 2001, p. 2).

In Uganda, an admission test to an LLB was introduced in 2009 at Uganda Christian University with the goal of improving the quality of students admitted to law school (Emedot, 2011). Two years later, Makerere University, one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher learning in Africa, introduced the test for consideration to law school (Makerere University, 2011). This was as a result of poor academic performance in law school despite the impressive grades obtained by enrollees in prior studies, i.e. A-Level of secondary education. The poor performance in law school was mainly attributed to shortfalls in the areas of comprehension, communication, analysis and knowledge in legal principles (Makerere University, 2012, p. 1). In light of these shortfalls, it is not surprising therefore that the University considered the option of introducing the test for consideration to law school. The questionable aspect, however, is relying heavily on the outcome of the test as a measure of determining competence of candidates for consideration to law school. Particularly, the aspect of relying solely on grades obtained in the test to determine admissions on government sponsorship (Makerere University, 2012, p. 5) undermines the relevance prior studies in predicting competencies required to excel academically in law school.

In a review of literature, Shultz and Zedeck (2011) argue that a combination of LSAT and UGPA has statistical support with regard to predicting first-year academic achievement of enrollees in law school (Anthony *et al.*, 1999; Dalessandro *et al.*, 2005; Powers, 1982; Evans, 1984; Schrader, 1977; Norton *et al.* 2006; Wightman, 1993). The fact that Stilwell *et al.* (2003) arrive at the same conclusion using a two-year period suggests that a combination of the test and attainment in prior studies would reliably predict the academic achievement of law school graduates. In other words, it would not be surprising that the outcome of an admission test alone would not predict the academic achievement of law school graduates, as the structure of the test is different from that of eventual law school examinations. Thus, Shultz and Zedeck's (2011) argument of a likely relationship between academic achievement and outcome of the admission test when assessed on criteria similar to that of the test would have substantial support. Nevertheless, establishing the true state of affairs regarding these arguments can only be achieved through research in the subject area.

Data and methods

Data source

The investigations were based on administrative records of 815 LLB enrollees of Makerere University's School of Law in the 2012 and 2013 cohorts. The students were admitted to law school on the basis of their performance in the admission test. The data

pertaining to the students were obtained from the Academic Registrar Information System (ARIS). The ARIS is a sub-system of Integrated Tertiary System, an information system used by the University at the time of the study. Data on the outcome of the test were obtained from administrative records of the students available with the University's academic registrar.

Variables and measurements

The academic achievement was assessed using the cumulative grade point average obtained by the enrollees in the first year of study (FYGPA) in law school. Performance in prior studies was assessed by the grades obtained in selected subjects undertaken at the A-Level of secondary education. The subjects are literature, history, divinity, economics and geography. These subjects predict to the academic achievement of students in law school (Nalukenge *et al.*, 2014). The characteristics of students considered in the assessment were nationality, gender, entry scheme and prior academic qualifications at enrollment.

Data analysis

The analysis was undertaken at three stages. First, a descriptive summary of enrollees' performance in the admission test and FYGPA was assessed using summary statistics. Further, a descriptive summary of enrollees' characteristics was made using frequency distributions. Second, association between performance in the admission test and characteristics of enrollees was established using the analysis of variance test. Third, predictors of enrollees' performance in the admission test were investigated using two models. In the first model (Model I), performance in the admission test was made by enrollees' characteristics and attainment in selected A-Level subjects done at the A-Level of secondary education. In Model II, performance in the test was made by enrollees' characteristics, performance in selected A-Level subjects and FYGPA. The analysis in Model II was made using data relating to enrollees in the 2012 cohort.The analysis in Model II was, however, made using the 2012 enrollment cohort, as complete results of academic achievement in their first year of bachelor's study in law school were available.

The analysis in both models was undertaken using robust regression. The choice of the robust regression, adopted at the third stage of the analysis, was based on the fact that the ordinary least squares, in a multiple linear regression (MLR), was not appropriate because of the violation of its fundamental assumptions, i.e. outliers, non-normality, influential points and/or missing data, among others (Ho and Naugher, 2000). However, the robust regression is able to cope with or detect outlying observations in the direction of both the dependent and explanatory variables (Berk, 1990; Birkes and Dodge, 1993; Alma, 2011). In particular, the quantile or median regression was applied in both models. The functional format of FYGPA – a continuous variable – was determined in the analysis using multivariate fractional polynomials. The computational formula for the analysis in both models is:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_i + \beta_2 X_i + \cdots + \beta_k X_k + \varepsilon_i$$

Where Y_i is the performance (score) in the admission test; i represents students; X_i and β_i are the independent variables (students' characteristics and FYGPA) and their corresponding coefficients, respectively; β_0 is the constant; and ε_i denotes error terms. The subsequent sections present results based on the aforementioned analysis plan.

Results

The results of the study are arranged according to four major themes: students' characteristics, academic achievement, attainment in selected subjects undertaken at the A-Level of secondary education and outcome of the admission test. The predictors of attainment in the test were investigated using the rest of the variables. The subsequent sections present results based on these themes; a summary of the results is made subsequently.

Characteristics of students

Table I presents descriptive summary of enrollees by their characteristics of gender, year of enrollment, nationality, entry scheme and academic qualification at enrollment.

The students assessed are characterized as predominantly Ugandan by nationality (97.9 per cent), male (69.0 per cent) and enrolled on private entry scheme (80.9 per cent);

Students' characteristics	*n*	(%)
Gender		
Female	253	31.0
Male	562	69.0
Total	815	100.0
Enrollment cohort		
2012	461	56.6
2013	354	43.4
Total	815	100.0
Nationality		
Non-Ugandan	17	2.1
Ugandan	798	97.9
Total	815	100.0
Entry scheme		
Government	156	19.1
Private (day)	511	62.7
Private (evening)	148	18.2
Total	815	100.0
Prior qualification[a]		
A-Level	612	75.1
Bachelor's degree	102	12.5
Others	101	12.4
Total	815	100.0

Note: [a] Academic qualifications at enrollment

Table I.
Descriptive summary of students' characteristics

slightly over five-in-every nine (56.6 per cent) were enrollees in the 2012 cohort. With regard to academic qualifications at enrollment, about three-in-every four (75.1 per cent) were graduates of A-Level; 12.5 per cent were bachelor's degree holders, while the rest were either diploma holders in law, other diploma holders with at least a second class award or mature age entrants following an examination conducted by the University's Institute of Adult and Continuing Education.

Academic achievement

Table II presents summary statistics regarding the academic achievement of the students based on the FYGPA. As earlier indicated, assessment is made for only enrollees in the 2012 cohort.

The mean FYGPA of enrollees was 2.65. This figure implies a "Lower Second" class of degree obtained by a considerable number of students in law school.

Performance in the test and prior studies

Tables III and IV present summary statistics on attainment in the admission test and selected subjects undertaken by the enrollees in their A-Level of secondary education.

The mean scores in the tests for enrollees in 2012 and 2013 cohorts were 59.2 and 67.1, respectively. Further, results in Table III show a significantly higher performance of enrollees in the 2012 cohort when compared to those in 2013. With regards to attainment in secondary education in Table IV, the main A-level subjects undertaken by enrollees were economics, history and divinity. The subjects were undertaken by 71.8 per cent, 70.8 per cent and 53.6 per cent of the enrollees, respectively. In other words, majority of the enrollees did not do literature (61.8 per cent) and geography (74.9 per cent). The highest proportions of students who took the subjects at the A-Level obtained Grade B, followed by those with Grade A.

Differentials in outcome of the test

Tables V and VI present differentials in the outcome of the admission test by students' characteristics and performance in the subjects done at the A-Level of secondary education, respectively. A summary of the results is made subsequently.

Enrollment cohort	*n*	Mean (95% CI)[a]	Min	Max
2012	379	2.65 (2.59 – 2.69)	0.60	3.90

Notes: A variation in totals is due to incomplete records or data; [a]95% confidence interval of FYGPA

Table II. Descriptive summary of students' FYGPA

Enrollment cohort	*n*	Mean (95% CI)	Min	Max
2012	446	59.2 (58.6 – 59.8)	50	83
2013	348	67.1 (66.4 – 67.8)	50	89

Note: Variations in totals were due to missing data; [a]95% confidence interval of the mean

Table III. Descriptive summary of students' attainment in the admission test

A-Level subjects	*n*	(%)
Literature		
N/A[a]	504	61.8
A	99	12.2
B	140	17.2
C	63	7.7
D+	9	1.1
Total	815	100.0
Divinity		
N/A	378	46.4
A	130	16.0
B	158	19.4
C	99	12.2
D+	50	6.1
Total	815	100.0
Economics		
N/A	230	28.2
A	77	9.5
B	148	18.2
C	172	21.1
D+	188	23.1
Total	815	100.0
Geography		
N/A	610	74.9
A	51	6.3
B	73	9.0
C	59	7.2
D+	22	2.7
Total	815	100.0
History		
N/A	238	29.2
A	112	13.7
B	333	40.9
C	112	13.7
D+	20	2.5
Total	815	100.0

Note: [a]N/A denotes student who did not do a subject at A-Level

Table IV.
Attainment in selected subjects done at A-Level of secondary education

In the results according to Table V, significant variations in the outcome of the admission test were noted by all the students' characteristics ($p < 0.05$). With the exception of economics, significant variations were noted in the outcome of the test by attainment of students in literature, divinity, geography and history ($p < 0.05$). However, an assessment of the mean scores for the various disciplines shows no particular logical order in performance between students who did the subjects at the A-Level and those who did not. Nevertheless, the significant variations in the results

Students' characteristics	Mean	*F*	*p*-value
Gender			
Female	61.58	7.38	0.0067
Male	63.15		
Enrollment cohort			
2012	59.18	293.46	0.0000
2013	67.11		
Nationality			
Non-Ugandan	55.31	15.66	0.0001
Ugandan	62.81		
Entry scheme			
Government	69.80	131.56	0.0000
Private (Day)	63.89		
Private (evening)	60.11		
Prior qualification[a]			
A-Level	62.71	11.39	0.0000
Bachelor's degree	64.88		
Others	59.68		

Notes: Analysis is made on all enrollees in the 2012 and 2013 cohorts using ANOVA test; [a]academic qualification at enrollment

Table V. Differentials in outcome of the test by students' characteristics

point to the need for further analysis to establish the net impact of the variables using the aforementioned multivariate tool.

Predictors of performance in the admission test

The outcome of the admission test was modeled at the first stage using the MLR. The diagnostic assessment of the results in Models I and II yielded the following results when the MLR was applied:

In Mode I:

- The homoscedasticity assumption, assessed using the Cook-Weisberg test ($\chi^2 = 34.2$, $p = 0.000$), was not supported ($p < 0.05$). In other words, a significant result ($p < 0.05$) indicated presence of unequal variance of the residuals along the predicted line, i.e. heteroskedasticity.
- The normality assumption of residuals, investigated using the Smirnov-Kolmogorov test, was not supported ($p < 0.05$) .
- In an assessment of the existence of outliers and/or influential points, conducted using standardized residuals, few values were found to be in excess of 3.5 or –3.5 (absolute values of the residuals were less than 3.5), thus confirming the existence of outliers and/or influential cases.

In Mode II:

- The homoscedasticity assumption, assessed using the Cook-Weisberg test ($\chi^2 = 177.6, p = 0.000$) , was not supported ($p < 0.05$) . In other words, a significant result

A-Level subjects	Mean	*F*	*p*-value
Literature			
N/A[a]	62.02	6.05	0.0001
A	65.16		
B	63.84		
C	61.82		
D+	56.88		
Divinity			
N/A	63.00	3.08	0.0156
A	61.10		
B	61.96		
C	63.46		
D+	64.73		
Economics			
N/A	62.35	1.69	0.1494
A	64.46		
B	62.99		
C	61.89		
D+	62.71		
Geography			
N/A	62.70	3.27	0.0112
A	64.46		
B	63.80		
C	59.94		
D+	61.00		
History			
N/A	62.94	9.18	0.0000
A	66.31		
B	61.87		
C	61.17		
D+	60.60		

Table VI. Differentials in outcome of the test by selected subjects done at A-Level

Notes: Analysis is made on all enrollees in the 2012 and 2013 cohorts using ANOVA test; [a]denotes student who did not take a subject at A-Level

($p < 0.05$) indicated presence of unequal variance of the residuals along the predicted line, i.e. heteroskedasticity.

- The normality assumption of residuals, investigated using the Smirnov-Kolmogorov test, was not supported ($p < 0.05$) .
- In an assessment of the existence of outliers and/or influential points, conducted using standardized residuals, five values were found to be in excess of 3.5 or –3.5 (absolute values of the residuals were less than 3.5). The influence of these values was considered negligible to confirming the existence of outliers and/or influential cases.

In light of violations of the assumptions of MLR, the outcome of the test was modeled using the quantile or median regression. Worth noting is that the estimates

made using the quantile regression are more robust against such violations in the response measurement (Wei *et al.*, 2006; Angrist and Pischke, 2009). Table VII presents an analysis of the outcome of the examination by the independent variables.

Results in Model I show significant variations in outcome of the admission test by students' characteristics as well as performance in economics, history, geography and divinity. The findings are summarized as follows:

- Males obtained higher scores in the test compared to the females ($p < 0.01$).
- Enrollees in the 2013 cohort obtained higher scores in the test compared to their counterparts in 2012 ($p < 0.01$).
- Ugandan nationals obtained higher scores in the test compared to the non-Ugandans ($p < 0.01$).
- Privately sponsored day and evening students obtained lower scores in the test compared to their counterparts on government entry scheme ($p < 0.01$).
- The outcome of the test was higher among bachelor's degree holders at enrollment compared to those with A-level of secondary education ($p < 0.01$). Those admitted with other academic qualifications had low scores in the test compared to those with A-Level ($p < 0.01$).
- Enrollees who did not do literature at the A-Level obtained higher grades in the test compared to those who obtained Grade A in the subject ($p < 0.05$). No significant variations in performance were noted for enrollees with the rest of the grades attained in the subject compared to those with Grade A.
- Enrollees who did not do geography in the A-Level had higher grades in the test compared to those who obtained Grade A in the subject ($p < 0.05$). No significant variations in performance were noted for enrollees with the rest of the grades attained in the subject.
- Enrollees who obtained Grade C in history obtained a lower score in the test compared to those who obtained Grade A in the subject ($p < 0.01$). No significant variations in performance were noted for enrollees with the rest of the grades attained in the subject.
- Enrollees who obtained Grade A in economics at the A-Level had a higher score in the test when compared to those with the rest of the grades attained in the subject ($p < 0.01$).

Results according to Model II show significant variations in the outcome of the test by entry scheme ($p < 0.01$) and academic qualifications at enrollment ($p < 0.05$). The findings are summarized as follows:

- Privately sponsored day and evening students obtained lower scores in the test compared to those admitted on government entry scheme ($p < 0.01$).
- Students admitted on the basis of other qualifications had lower scores in the test compared to enrollees with A-Level of secondary education. No significant variations in the outcome of the test were noted between enrollees admitted on the basis of bachelor's degree and those with A-Level.

Independent variables	Model I[a] Coef.	SE	*p*-value	Model II[b] Coef.	SE	*p*-value
Gender						
Male[†]	0.00			0.00		
Female	−1.09	0.204	0.000	−1.24	0.666	0.062
Enrollment cohort						
2012[†]	0.00					
2013	7.72	0.206	0.000			
Nationality						
Non-Ugandans[†]	0.00			0.00		
Ugandans	5.18	0.963	0.000	2.28	2.667	0.291
Entry scheme						
Government[†]	0.00			0.00		
Private (evening)	−10.00	0.244	0.000	−10.36	0.859	0.000
Private (day)	−5.27	0.294	0.000	−4.59	1.044	0.000
Prior qualification						
A-Level	0.00			0.00		
Bachelor's degree	3.36	0.835	0.000	−1.03	2.040	0.612
Others	−3.90	0.840	0.000	−5.49	2.035	0.007
Literature						
A[†]	0.00			0.00		
B	−0.18	0.482	0.585	−0.24	1.129	0.826
C	0.54	0.607	0.197	0.40	1.331	0.760
D++	−0.72	1.243	0.401	−1.63	2.246	0.467
N/A[c]	−0.27	0.499	0.431	−0.54	1.225	0.657
Divinity						
A[†]	0.00			0.00		
B	0.09	0.308	0.768	0.39	0.873	0.649
C	−0.36	0.365	0.321	−0.11	1.188	0.920
D++	0.18	0.450	0.687	0.24	2.121	0.909
N/A	0.90	0.329	0.006	0.54	0.997	0.582
Economics						
A[†]	0.00			0.00		
B	−1.45	0.353	0.000	−2.11	1.144	0.066
C	−1.36	0.354	0.000	−2.01	1.171	0.086
D++	−1.27	0.368	0.001	−1.91	1.258	0.130
N/A	−1.18	0.690	0.088	−2.76	2.281	0.226
Geography						
A[†]	0.00			0.00		
B	0.18	0.462	0.694	0.95	1.769	0.589
C	0.18	0.500	0.717	0.78	1.812	0.666
D++	0.27	0.642	0.671	1.42	2.159	0.510
N/A	1.09	0.418	0.009	0.75	1.616	0.640

Table VII. Regression estimates of performance in the admission test

(*continued*)

Independent variables	Model I[a] Coef.	SE	*p*-value	Model II[b] Coef.	SE	*p*-value
History						
A[†]	0.00			0.00		
B	−0.54	0.287	0.058	−1.65	1.284	0.199
C	−1.09	0.362	0.003	−2.05	1.415	0.148
D++	1.00	0.630	0.113	0.49	1.962	0.799
N/A	−0.63	0.600	0.290	3.50	2.649	0.186
FYGPA				0.70	0.522	0.180
Constant	61.90	0.919	0.000	66.15	3.000	0.000

Notes: Analysis is based on quantile (median) regression; [†]reference categories adopted; [a]pseudo $R^2 = 0.4479$, minimum sum of deviations = 2,643.4 and raw sum of deviations = 4,788; [b]Pseudo $R^2 = 0.3771$, minimum sum of deviations = 1,157.3 and raw sum of deviations = 1,858; [c]denotes students who did not do the subject at A-Level

Table VII.

Overall, no significant variations in the outcome of the test were noted between students who obtained Grade A and those who did not do the subjects at their A-Level of secondary education ($p > 0.05$). Further, the outcome of the test did not vary significantly by enrollees' attainment in the first year of study in law school ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

Overall, competence in the disciplines is not required by prospective students of law to excel in the aptitude test. This is demonstrated in the results by the non-significant variations in the outcome of the test between enrollees who did not do the subjects at the A-Level of secondary education and those who obtained Grade A. Further, non-significant variations in the outcome of the test were noted between students who obtained Grade A and other grades in the disciplines investigated. These findings support the argument that admission tests are intended to assess mental rather than educational or academic ability of prospective students of law (LNAT Consortium, 2010; Law School Admission Council, 2013, 2001). In citing Henry Witham of the University of Tennessee regarding the tests, the LSAC writes: "the tests discover inherent mental ability (as applied to law), but do not show the will to work nor the capacity for work" (Law School Admission Council, 2001, p. 2). On the contrary, Witham's argument of poor performance of students who do poorly on the aptitude test does not have statistical support, as attainment in the test was not significantly associated in the results with grades obtained in the A-Level disciplines. Nevertheless, idea of enhancing the predictive value of the test by combining it with applicants' ability to work, demonstrated by their academic achievement in prior studies (Law School Admission Council, 2013, 2001), is highly supported.

Although the requirements for admission to law school in various academic and/or related institutions underscore the importance of enrollees' grounding in literature (Alabama State Bar, 2013; Nalukenge *et al.*, 2014; University of Canterbury, 2013), the findings in this study were otherwise. The outcome of the test was not associated in the results with grades obtained in the discipline at the A-Level. This evidence implies that the outcome of the test is

limited in providing competencies in the area of analytical writing in English, critical proficiency in oral communication as well as ability to identify, formulate problems and draw conclusions. Basing on the FYGPA of enrollees who were admitted to law school at the University on the basis of their attainment at the A-Level (Nalukenge *et al.*, 2014), it should not be a surprise that the performance of the students enrolled in law school using the admission test – in this study – is significantly lower. This is because the admission test is meant to assess inherent mental or reasoning skills rather than competencies required to excel academically in law school (LNAT Consortium, 2010; Shultz and Zedeck, 2011). As a matter of fact, the highest proportion of the students admitted on the basis of the admission test obtained Grade B in the A-Level disciplines. Certainly, the academic ability of these students does not compare favorably to that of their counterparts admitted on the basis of their impressive grades in the disciplines (Nalukenge *et al.*, 2014). Thus, poor performance in law school should not come as a surprise when admission is based mainly on the outcome of the test.

In addition to the impact on the academic achievement, a shift in admission requirements – from enrollees' attainment in prior studies to the outcome of admission tests – brings about variations in characteristics of students admitted to law school. With regards to the gender distribution, majority of the enrollees admitted on the basis of the admission test – in this study – were males. This is contrary to the gender distribution of law enrollees at the University who were admitted on the basis of their attainment in A-Level of secondary education (Nalukenge *et al.*, 2014; Wamala, 2013). As earlier indicated, the highest proportion of students admitted on the basis of their attainment in A-Level obtained Grade A in the subjects. On the contrary, the highest proportion of students enrolled on the basis of the admission test – in this study – obtained Grade B in the subjects. Thus, it is highly probable that the argument of variations in the characteristics of students admitted to law school and their attainment in prior studies will hold across institutions when admission requirements are revised accordingly.

In conclusion, the outcome of the admission test does not predict competencies required by enrollees to excel academically in law school. Thus, to obtain the most academically competent candidates for consideration to law school, the outcome of the test should be assessed alongside the academic achievement of enrollees in their prior studies. In particular, emphasis should be made on performance of enrollees in the disciplines identified with proficiencies of undertaking law rather than a pooled index of grades obtained in the A-Level of secondary education. However, this argument may not be applied to candidates in countries where a bachelor's degree is a requirement for admission to law school. Nevertheless, the idea of assessing the outcome of admission tests alongside the academic achievement of enrollees in prior studies holds irrespective of whether or not a bachelor's degree is a requirement for admission to law school.

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Further reading

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