

**ADMINISTRATION OF SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION BY WAEC AND NECO IN EKITI
STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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Abstract

This study compared the administration of Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) as perceived Principals, Vice Principals and Heads of Department of Secondary Schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Research questions were raised on examination administration, standard of examination questions, marking and releasing of results. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 Principals, 50 Vice Principals and 50 Heads of Department and these totalled 150 respondents. The researcher constructed and validated a questionnaire tagged School Certificate Examination Administration Questionnaire (SCEA Q) for use. It consisted of items on respondents' bio-data as well as information on administration of the examination. Frequency count, percentage and Chi -square were used for data analysis. The result -of the study showed that WAEC was perceived to be better organized in terms of the administration of the examination. Its officials were perceived to be more efficient in terms of supervision during examinations while NECO examination was perceived to be easier for the students to pass. it was recommended that NECO should ensure improvement of the conduct and supervision of the school certificate examination so as to attain to expected standard.

Introduction

The crave to acquire one certificate or the other seems to be high especially nowadays when paper qualification is the order of the day. The basic qualification for admission into any higher educational institution is the school

certificate issued by the West African School Certificate Examinations Council (WAEC) and/or the National Examinations Council (NECO).

The WAEC was established through Ordinance 40 of 1951 that charged the body with determining the examinations required in the public interest in West Africa. The body was empowered to conduct such examinations and award certificates equivalent to those of examining authorities in the United Kingdom. There had been a lot of criticisms levied against West African Examination Council since its inception. Prominent among them according to Temitope (1999) and Kolawole (2001) were mass leakage of examination papers at times traceable to the officials of the council, unnecessary delay in releasing results, uncontrollable population explosion of the candidates and over load of work as a result of too many examinations conducted by the council. The level of exam malpractice was so high in 1977 that the situation was tagged "Expo 77". This actually led the Federal Government to set up the Sogbetun Commission of inquiry to look into the problems of WAEC and the possibility of relieving the body of some of its burdens. The Sogbetun Commission's recommendations led to establishment of the National Examinations Council (NECO).

National Examinations Council (NECO), which was established in April 1999, transformed from the National Board for Educational Measurement (NBEM) established by Decree 69 of 1993. The body was also charged with the responsibility of conducting the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE), the first of which was conducted by the body in May/June 2000. This new examining body too was not left out of criticism since its inception and especially when its maiden result was released. Some of the criticisms levied against NECO as highlighted by Oyewole (1999) and Okomonuwa (2000) were that NECO lacked capacity for the conduct of SSCE and that it could not enjoy national acceptability and international recognition. It was further alleged that NECO was a ploy to help candidates from certain part of the country to obtain cheap passes. Besides, it has no syllabus of its own, its examination was so cheap that it issued results for even dead candidates. Thus making results from NECO examination to be almost worthless.

Animasaun (1999) stressed that the creation of the National Examinations Council (NECO) as an alternative examination body to West African Examinations Council (WAEC) is seen as a right step in solving most of the problems created by WAEC's monopoly of the conduct of final examinations at the secondary school level. Cases of examination malpractices and unnecessary delays in the release of results would become a thing of the past if more examination bodies are established. According to him, NECO was established to break the monopoly of WAEC and thereby put smiles on the faces of many Nigerians.

NECO successfully conducted its first SSCE in 2000. Allaying peoples' fear of a possible rejection of NECO's result, Adeniran (2001) made it clear that University Vice- Chancellors who are mere executors of government decisions on education, do not have the right as to which certificate to accept or reject. But despite the alleged rejection of NECO certificates by some tertiary institutions in the country, over 1.2 million candidates registered for May/June 2001 NECO Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. That was a sign of acceptance of the new examination body nationwide (Ojerinde 2001). The criticisms against these examining bodies gave the researcher a lot of concern. The need to investigate and compare the administration of Secondary School Certificate Examination by West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) was identified.

The purpose of this study was to compare the administration of school certificate examination by WAEC and NECO as perceived by school Principals, Vice Principals and Heads of Department who usually supervise the examinations in secondary schools. The study also investigated whether perceived differences exist in the supervisory roles played during the examination and compared the Principals' perception of the standard maintained by the bodies in terms of setting of questions, release of results and the extent to which candidates passed their papers. To guide this investigation, the following questions were addressed.

1. Do school administrators (Principals, Vice Principals and Heads of Department) in Ekiti State perceive whether differences exist in the administration of school certificate examination by WAEC and NECO.
2. Is there any perceived difference in the supervisory roles of officials of WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State
3. Is there a difference in the standard maintained by WAEC and NECO in terms of items, marking and release of results?

Methodology

The study is a descriptive research. The population for the study consists of all the Principals, Vice Principals and Heads of Department of all the 154 secondary schools in Ekiti State. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 10 out of the existing 16 local government areas. A total of 50 schools were used for the study. The Principal, Vice Principal (Academics) and Head of Department of each of the 50 schools were sampled and used as respondents, making a total of 150 respondents in all.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled School Certificate Examination Administration Questionnaire (SCEAQ). It was developed by the researcher and used to collect information. The face and content validities of the instrument were ascertained by specialists in Educational Management and Test and Measurement. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher in the selected schools to the school administrators. They responded to each item on the questionnaire. The data collected was analyzed using frequency count, percentages and Chi-square statistics.

Results

The results are presented in table I below;

Table 1 Comparison of the Administration of SSCE by WAEC and NECO

S/N	ITEMS	N	WAEC	NECO	X ²
1	Which body is better organized in terms of conduct of examination.	150	136(90.6%)	14(9.4%)	92.55
2	Which of the bodies maintained a better standard in term of conduct of exam	150	136(90.6%)	14(9.4%)	92.55
3	Which of the bodies has more problems Which of the bodies has more problems regarding shortage of question papers? are usually not sufficient	150	35(23.3%)	120(80%)	45.94
4	Which body has more problems with distribution of questions?	150	22(12.7%)	128(85.3%)	78.68
5	5. Which body's questions are usually easier for students to answer?	150	30(20.0%)	120 (80%)	57.68
6	Whose officials are more efficient during the conduct of the exam?	150	126(84.0%)	24(16%)	55.37
7	Which of the officials condone students during supervision?	150	47(31.3%)	103(68.78%)	23.17
8	Which body has its officials visit schools more regularly during exams?	150	101(67.3%)	49(32.7%)	16.02
9	Which body is more efficient in terms of marking of exam scripts?	150	125(83.3%)	25(16.7%)	62.75
10	Which is more prompt at releasing results?	150	96(64.0%)	54(36.0%)	10.14
11	Whose exam is easier for students to pass?	150	29(19.3%)	121(80.6%)	60.19
12	Which of the bodies do schools usually complain more about during the conduct of the exam?	150	35(23.3%)	115(76.7%)	45.9

Results and Discussion

The responses summarised in table 1 shows that WAEC was perceived to be better organized in terms of the conduct of examination as majority (90.6%) of the respondents picked WAEC and only (9.4%) considered NECO to be better organized. Also, most of the respondents (90.6%) considered WAEC to maintain better standard in terms of the conduct of their examination. Most respondents (76.7%) picked NECO as the body whose questions are usually not sufficient i.e. (not enough to go round the students registered) while (85.3%) again picked NECO as usually having problems with distribution of questions. The Principal, Vice Principals and Heads of Department were also almost unanimous (80%) in their perception that NECO's questions are usually easier for students to answer. Significant differences were found in their perception of whose officials were more efficient during the conduct of the examination (84%) for WAEC and (16%) for NECO. The questions of which officials condone students during examination showed a unanimous support for WAEC with 67.3% and 32.7% for NECO. On the more efficient body in terms of marking of examination script, respondents favoured WAEC with (83.3%) and (16.7%) for prompt release of results. However, majority (80.6%) perceived that NECO exams are easier for students to pass than WAEC with only (19.3%). Lastly the view of the respondents is that the body against which schools have more complaints during the conduct of the exam is NECO with (76.76%) and only (23.2%) pointed accusing fingers at WAEC.

In summary, the results in the above table indicated that the higher scores for WAEC were on items 1,2,6,8,9,10. That is, WAEC is better organized in conducting examinations, maintains standard in conducting exam, has are more efficient officials and visit schools more regularly during exams, NECO his higher scores on items 3,4,5,7, 11 and 12. That is, NECO's questions are usually not sufficient and thus its staff usually have problems with distribution of questions usually has easier questions, for students and gives schools more problems during examinations.

Discussion

From the results, WAEC is perceived by the respondents to be better organized in conducting school certificate examinations. This could be attributed to its long years of existence as an examining body which has learnt through experience the art and methods of planning and of organizing public examinations. Despite various criticisms, WAEC is still perceived to be better organized and even more efficient when conducting examination. This is evident from Laolu (2002) who stressed that there is no time WAEC releases results without having a backlog of seized results or withheld students' results and examination malpractices. This, no doubt, revealed that the body does not condone any malpractice or misbehaviour.

WAEC was also found to excel in terms of supervision of schools during examinations. Evidences gathered revealed that WAEC officials are perceived to be more strict and firm. Good preparation, planning and effective management by the authorities of WAEC must have helped them to achieve this level of perception. WAEC was also perceived to be more efficient in marking and prompt release of results. This could also be as a result of the available experienced markers who had been appointed by the body from among the secondary school teachers to mark the subjects of their specialization. The facilities for collation, computation and compilation of result are also available to facilitate the prompt release of result.

Responses have also proved that school administrators usually have more problems during NECO examinations. This, no doubt, had been because the body is still relatively new in conducting examinations. The body is still consolidating its personnel, facilities and management. Also WAEC had been established for a long time while NECO is still facing teaching problems of growth. Within the shortest time possible NECO will get itself properly established.

It was also revealed in the findings that school administrators perceive that students found it easier to pass NECO than the WAEC. This result is contrary to the findings of Ogunjemilua (2001) which revealed that the psychometric property

of WAEC and NECO in Mathematics multiple choice items were not significantly different indicating non-supremacy of one examining body over the other. Ayodele (2002) further found that from the students raw scores, those who score high marks in WAEC were also the set of students that scored comparatively high marks in NECO. Besides, those who were within the first to the twentieth positions in WAEC SSCE were also in the same range in the NECO SSCE. Furthermore, sets of students that scored low grades in WAEC SSCE scored low grades in the NECO SSCE. Therefore, NECO examinations cannot be said to be cheap and its standards can neither be underrated nor its certificate seen as inferior as emphasized by Oyewole (1999) and Okomonua (2000). The long experience of WAEC as an examining body could still be an advantage. The fact that people generally don't want a change might be responsible for the negative perception about NECO. Many of these respondents might be of the view that no other body can be better than WAEC; consequently, whatever any other examining body does will never satisfy such respondents.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that WAEC was perceived to be better organized in conducting, supervising, releasing results and maintaining standard in school certificate examinations than NECO. In addition, more students pass NECO examinations than the WAEC despite the fact that schools have more problems during the conduct of NECO exams. The officials of the two examination bodies engaged in thorough supervision during examinations but WAEC officials were found to be more efficient. Both examination bodies were however found to maintain standard in setting questions and conducting examinations generally. This notwithstanding, respondents underrated NECO when compared with WAEC in some areas such as distribution of question papers, supervision and conduct of the examinations. It is therefore recommended that WAEC should not relent in its effort to maintain standards while NECO should work toward a high standard in the conduct, marking and prompt releasing of results. Officials could also be given orientation on how to be more efficient during supervision. Efforts should however be made to ensure that examination malpractices are eradicated in all schools.

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