

**ASSESSMENT OF THE CONDUCT OF SENIOR SCHOOL
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION BY WAEC AND NECO IN
EKITI STATE, NIGERIA**

By

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Abstract

This study evaluated the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) by WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State. The purpose was to ascertain how stakeholders rate the conduct of examinations by both bodies. The design was a descriptive research of the survey type. Sample consisted of 500 respondents drawn from the 16 Local Government Areas of Ekiti State. The instrument for collecting data was a Public Examination Rating Scale (PERS) constructed and validated by the researcher. Two hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that there exist significant differences between the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO as well as the conduct of the examinations in urban and rural areas. It was concluded that the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State was fairly satisfactory in terms of qualification and that the gap between the conduct of SSCE by both examining bodies in urban and rural areas was too wide signifying that more attention should be paid to supervision of WAEC and NECO examinations in the rural areas.

Introduction

Evaluation is a human activity usually carried out to ascertain the worth, value or credibility of an action, operation or a programme. Studies by Yoloye (1991), Okpala, Onocha and Oyedeji (1993), Afolabi (1998), Bandele (1998) and Ojerinde (2000) revealed that evaluation involves such activities as gathering of valid information on attainment of educational objectives, analyzing and fashioning information to aid judgement on effectiveness of an educational programme. Evaluation of programme in this context is undimensional. That is, it

focuses on the assessment of the objectives of the programme along the line of its consistency, trustworthiness, effectiveness and efficiency such as assessing the conduct of the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) in Ekiti State.

Examination is an academic exercise designed to obtain information about those who are examined. Tyler (1971) and Nunally (1972) defined examination as a standardized situation designed to elicit a sample of an individual's behaviour. Fagbamiye (1998) described examination as a tool for measuring and judging the standard of education in any country. It is believed that no country can rise above the level of her educational standards, no matter the political propaganda or economic manipulation, except such a country fashions out a dynamic educational system matched with valid and reliable testing programmes. In other words without valid and reliable examinations and results, there can be no national development either socially, economically, scientifically or technologically.

In the last five decades, it could be observed that Nigeria has made concerted efforts at providing qualitative education for her citizens which had led to the establishment of a number of examination bodies to monitor and maintain educational standards, encourage a learning society identify special talents within the population and control curricula. The conduct such examinations as may be considered appropriate and award certificates on the results of the examination conducted (Nwana, 1982; Oluwatayo, 2004). Prominent among the examining bodies are the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) established in 1952, the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) established in 1978; the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) established in 1978; the National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB) established in 1992 and the National Board for Educational Measurement (NBEM) established in 1992 but later transformed to National Examinations Council (NECO) in 1998. The essence of public examinations is to provide equal opportunities to all members of the society irrespective of the type of education they have acquired (Okpala, Onocha and Oyedeji, 1993; Fodayajo and Makoju, 1997; Ojerinde, 2000). Essentially, the public examination boards are concerned with large scale

testing programmes resulting in a large number of candidates sitting for the examinations since restriction of candidates is minimal (Ojerinde, 2000).

Moreover, the public examination boards lay emphasis on certification as an end in itself and not a means to an end (Ikegbunna, 1996). This is the crux of the matter because every typical Nigerian is now over-conscious of examinations and tends to believe implicitly in the certificates and paper qualification so necessary for admission into higher institutions of learning. One of the major problems facing examinations, particularly public examination such as the senior school certificate examination (SSCE) conducted by WAEC and NECO, is the notorious examination malpractices among the candidates. According to Oluyeba (1998), examination malpractice occurs in its various forms throughout Nigeria and there is no state that could be exonerated from it.

The pattern of examination malpractice ranges from impersonation to smuggling of already prepared answers written by others into the examination hall, corporate cheating by the candidates, concealing of notes in private parts, use of mobile phones, use of electronic computers and other unethical behaviours. Studies by Oluyeba (1998), Fagamiye (1998) and Adetunberu (1998) showed that the rate of examination malpractice is at its peak in the southern part of Nigeria while those states that recorded the lowest percentage of cases of examination malpractices are in the northern part of Nigeria. This poses a serious threat to educational standards in Nigeria because examinations should be essentially a system of measurement designed to provide information about those who are tested.

Studies on administration of examination in Nigeria (Longe, 1977; Ojikutu, 1992) showed that administration of examination is the most sensitive and volatile aspect of any examination whether internal or external. It is regarded as the image maker of any examination board. The authors asserted that no matter the standard of examination questions, if it is poorly conducted, the results obtained would give a false representation of the examinees' ability. This may be true about the SSCE conducted by WAEC and NECO in Nigeria. Ekiti State is coined the ***fountain of knowledge*** because of her affinity for education and what it entails. It is believed that hardly could one get a family in

Ekiti town without at least a university graduate. The most popular public examination among the youths in Ekiti State is the senior school certificate examination conducted by WAEC and NECO. The results of these examinations are used for admission into higher institutions of learning in Ekiti State and outside. However, the statistics published by the Examination Ethics Project (2004) showed that Ekiti State ranked 4th in number of candidates involved in examination malpractices among the states in the south-west during the May/June 2002 SSCE by WAEC. Many people blamed this situation on the ineffective conduct of the examination by WAEC and its agents. One may therefore ask, how effective or satisfactory is the conduct of senior school certificate examination by WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State?

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State. It aimed at finding out whether there will be any difference between the conduct of the examination by WAEC and NECO and whether there will be any difference between the conduct of the examination in urban and rural areas of Ekiti State.

Research Questions

1. How do stakeholders rate the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State?
2. Is there any difference between the rating of WAEC and NECO's conduct of SSCE by stakeholders in Ekiti State?
3. Is there any difference between the rating of WAEC and NECO regarding the conduct of SSCE in urban and rural areas in Ekiti State.

Research hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the rating of WAEC and NECO's conduct of SSCE in Ekiti State by stakeholders.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the conduct of SSCE by 2 (a)

WAEC in the urban and rural areas,
(b) NECO in the urban and rural areas.

Methodology

The design was a descriptive research of the survey type. The sample consisted of 500 respondents from all the 16 Local Government Areas of Ekiti State selected by the stratified random sampling technique. Subjects include 32 Ministry of Education Officials, 80 Secondary School Vice Principals, 220 Secondary Schools Teachers, 120 Undergraduates, 50 Religious Leaders and 28 Secondary School Principals. An instrument tagged Public Examination Rating Scale (PERS) was constructed, validated and used for collecting data. The scale has four levels and 20 items. Administration of instrument was partly done by the researcher and partly by Research Assistants.

Results and Discussion

Research Question one: How do stakeholders rate the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO in Ekiti State?

The means and percentages of subjects' ratings of the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO is presented in table 1.

'Table 1 Stakeholders' Ratings of conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO

Variables	N	X	Satisfactory %	Not satisfactory %
WAEC	500	46.94	58.7	41.3
NECO	500	42.56	53.2	46.8

Table 1 shows the stakeholders level of satisfaction with the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO. WAEC had 58.7% while NECO had 53.2% of the respondents expressing satisfaction. The results showed that the conduct of

SSCE by WAEC and NECO was satisfactory to stakeholder though WAEC was more satisfactory.

Hypothesis Testing

HO : There is no significant difference between the stakeholders' rating WAEC and NECO's regarding the conduct of SSCE in Ekiti State. Data collected was subjected to t-test analysis as shown in table 2.

Table 2: t-test Summary of WAEC and NECO's conduct of SSCE.

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t	t-tab
WAEC	500	46.94	4.49	499	12.60*	1.96
NECO	500	42.56	6.34			

* $t < 0.05$ (significant result)

Table 2 shows that the t-test calculated gave 12.60 while its corresponding table value gave 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there exists a significant difference between the rating of WAEC and NECO regarding the conduct of SSCE in Ekiti State.

HO: There is no significant difference between the conduct of
 a) WAEC SSCE in urban and rural areas
 b) NECO SSCE in urban and rural areas

The t-test summary between WAEC SSCE and NECO SSCE in urban and rural areas are presented in table 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3: t-test for WAEC SSCE in Urban and Rural Areas.

Variable	N	X	SD	df	t	t-table
Urban	372	48.50	5.41			
				498	8.64	1.96
Rural	128	42.4	1			7.22

* $P < 0.05$ (significant Result)

Tables 3 shows that the t-test calculated for conduct of WAEC examinations in urban and rural areas gave 8.64 while its corresponding table value was 1.96 at 0.05 significant. Therefore there is a significant difference between the conduct of SSCE WAEC in urban and rural areas. Hence the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 4: t-test for NECO SSCE in Urban and Rural

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t	t-test
Urban	372	5.38				
				498	3.61	1.96
Rural	128	38.54	8.54			

*P <0.05 (significant Result)

Table 4 showed that the t-test calculated gave 13.61 while its corresponding table value was 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study sought to find out whether the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO is satisfactory or not to stakeholders. The results showed that the subjects' rating of both examining bodies was relatively satisfactory since both obtained above 50% ratings. These results negate the impression that the conduct of SSCE by WAEC and NECO is not satisfactory. Hypothesis one sought to find out whether differences between the means of WAEC and NECO could be attributed to chance. The results showed that the difference was significant. This may be due to the fact that WAEC officials are more experienced in the administration of examinations (Oluyeba, 1998).

Hypothesis two sought to find out whether there is any significant difference between the conduct of SSCE / NECO and WAEC in urban and rural areas in Ekiti State. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the conduct of SSCE by both examining bodies in urban and rural areas. Sampled opinions showed that candidates now prefer to register for public

examinations in the rural areas where accessibility is limited in order to perpetrate examination malpractices (Bendele, 1993).

The paper concludes that examination appears to be trivialized in the rural areas, a serious threat to valid and reliable educational measurement in Nigeria. It is suggested that both examining bodies should gear up efforts at controlling the conduct of their examinations noting that when the public begins to doubt the reliability and the validity of any examination system, justification for the existence of such an examining institution is in a serious jeopardy. Examining bodies should therefore pay more attention to the supervision of their examinations conducted in the rural areas to avoid bastardizing the integrity of examination system in Nigeria.

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