

ASSESSMENT OF THE CONDUCT OF THE WAEC EXAMINATIONS IN OYO AND OSUN STATES, NIGERIA

By

DR. E.A. Okwilagwe,
Institute of Education,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study assessed the conduct of West African School Certificate (WAEC) examinations in two states (Oyo and Osun). The subjects consisted of 14 WAEC supervisors and their assistants randomly drawn from urban and rural geographical locations. Three instruments were developed and used to gather data. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis. The results suggest that most WAEC supervisors have acceptable degree of supervision experience. WAEC makes adequate arrangement for the conduct of its examinations. Question papers were not always adequate and there were cases of examination malpractices in the course of WAEC examinations. The study recommends the compilation of candidates' list to guide the production of examination papers and the provision of other facilities including tested security personnel and innovation in seating arrangement.

Introduction

Public examinations by their nature are those tests designed for students who have been exposed to prescribed syllabuses (Okpala, Onacha & Oyedele, 1993). Examination is an important aspect of the educational system. By it, pupils' progress is measured and teachers' effectiveness is judged. Examination has equally been extended into almost every aspect of man's endeavour as both governmental and non-governmental organisations use one form of examination or another for various purposes.

Specifically, the outcome of examinations is used for placement, recruitment, selection and referral among others. The outcome of public examination is used mainly for certification and selection. In view of the role that

examination plays in making decisions that effect people's life, its proper conduct should be given all the attention it deserves.

Examination conduct was defined by the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2001) as the manner in which the examination is directed, controlled or managed. This definition implies the coordination of both persons and materials to ensure a hitch free examination. It actually involves the management of human and material resources in order to ensure high standard, ethical, moral and academic conduct in the examination process for reliable and valid results upon which important future decisions on human progress and development depend. It is pertinent to note that in spite of the unique procedures for conducting examinations that are peculiar to every public examining body, there are some other features that should be common to all. The sensitivity of this aspect of examining warrants that errors and other lapses are avoided in order not to mar the process. Failure to check these could be detrimental in terms of financial, human, time and material resources to the successful administration of examinations.

In the Nigerian context, the examination administrator is popularly called "supervisor". A proctor equally known as "Assistant Supervisor" usually assists them. It is the duty of these people to see to the proper conduct of the examination. They ensure that the hall and environment are quiet and conducive for the examination and that there are no malpractices of any sort. The supervisor also sees to the security of examination materials and answer scripts among others.

The duties of a proctor (assistant supervisor) are varied. They should be a credible and honest persons who are capable of maintaining a conducive examination atmosphere in the hall. They should assist in the supervision of the examination and fully participate in distribution of question papers and collection of answer papers and promptly report any observed malpractice to the supervisor. They should not collude with students to perpetrate acts of indiscipline.

In view of the recognition and acceptance that public examinations have gained in the eyes of the public and the important role that their results play in affecting students' advancement in life, conduct should be thorough. Absolute care must be exercised right from the production of the question papers, collating, packaging and the final administration. These activities obviously call for vigilance on the part of all those in charge of the processes. In the light of the foregoing, this paper sought to examine the extent of efficiency with which WAEC administers its exams (particularly the WAS SCE External Examination) in terms of the adequacy of the provision of materials and personnel, general preparation and the actual conduct of the examination.

Evaluation Questions

1. What is the profile of the supervisors?
2. How effective is the arrangement put in place by WAEC?
3. To what extent were materials available at the centres?
4. To what extent were these services effectively provided at the centres?
 - a. security of papers
 - b. security of lives
 - c. transportation?
5. To what extent are the examination regulations adhered to at the centres?

Methodology

The study is an evaluative research and the evaluative framework used was the CIPP model propounded by Stufflebeam (1967), However emphasis was laid mainly on the first three components. These are:

Context — Involves the consideration of the Board's objectives (i.e. conducting a valid, reliable and fair examination), needs to be met (e.g. satisfying the yearnings of a large group of population to obtain necessary certificates which are prerequisites for further academic advancement, and individuals to be served (out of school candidates).

Input - Identification and assessment of the board's capabilities (e.g. personnel, examination, environment, materials produced and provided), methods used to meet objectives in relation to cost.

Process — Identification of monitoring of project operation, to ascertain if it is on

course and whether there are defects in the procedure and implementation. The subjects used in this study were 14 WAEC supervisors and their assistants drawn randomly from two states (Oyo and Osun) and from 7 local government areas. Also used is one Higher Executive Officer in charge of examination administration in Ibadan zonal office. The supervisors were drawn from urban and rural areas. The examination papers covered include core subjects and non-core subjects such as Mathematics, Chemistry, Agriculture, Economics, Biology and English Language.

Three instruments were developed and used to gather data. These were the supervisor questionnaire (SQ), Examination Officer Questionnaire (EOQ) and an observation schedule. The SQ was divided into 2 sections and sought for information from supervisors on such areas as the level of training given, provision and adequacy of materials, observation of examination regulations, nature and extent of malpractices observed, security provision and problems encountered generally. EOQ was used to obtain information on the nature of preparation carried out by WAEC in terms of the adequacy and effectiveness of the arrangements made, extent of monitoring of examination and provision of security.

An observation of the conduct of the examination was carried out using the observation schedule and these indicators: time examination started and ended, nature of the examination centre, handling and distribution of materials, general behaviour of candidates, the role of security officers in maintaining law and order, attendance at centres and level of supervisors' vigilance. The instruments were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha and test re-test, reliability. These gave psychometric properties of $r = 0.771$; for SQ and 0.96 and 0.94 respectively for EOQ. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis.

Result

Evaluation Question 1: What is the profile of the supervisors?

Table 1: Supervisors' Profile

Characteristics	Male	Female
Sex	14	-
Age	35—45years	
Qualification	Trained Teachers	?
Teaching Experience	More than years	-
Supervision Experience	8 years and above	-

The result in Table 1 shows that the respondents were all young male adults professionally trained classroom teachers with some level of supervision experience.

Evaluation Question 2: How effective is the arrangement put in place by the examination board?

The responses to this question were provided by Supervisors and Zonal Examination Officers of WAEC. All the respondents who claimed that they were trained (Table 2) were of the opinion that the training was adequate for the supervision of the external WAS SC examination. The Zonal Examination Officer at the WAEC office

Table 2: Extent of Arrangement made by WAEC

	Yes	%	No	%
1. Is training given?	14	100		
2. Adequacy of training	14	100	—	—
3. Adequacy of security against leakage of papers	12	85.7	2	14.3
4. Is security provided?	10	71.4	3	21.4
5. Adequacy of security protection	1	7.1	13	92.9
6. Provision of transportation	7	50.0	7	50.0

corroborated this view on the provision of security protection at centres 10 (71.4%) admitted they had protection as against 3 (21.4%) who said they had none. Among the respondents, 13 (92.9%) as against 1 (7.1%) claimed that the

security protection was inadequate and feared that their lives were at risk. 'With respect to the provision of security made against paper leakage, 12(85.7%) as against 2(14.3%) of the respondents said it was adequate. Table 2 further shows that 50% of the respondents as against 50% claimed that transportation was not provided for the exercise. This claim was more common among the Oyo State respondents.

Table 3: Nature of Transportation used by Supervisors

Transportation means	No	%
Car	85	7.1
Motorcycle	21	4.3
Public transport	32	1.4
Trekking	1	7.1
Others	—	—
Total	149	9.9

Other arrangements put in place included packaging of question papers and other stationeries for the examination. To forestall examination leakage, it was gathered that law enforcement agents are used and incidences of leakages lead to outright cancellation of the papers as well as the results of the candidates involved. It was reliable gathered that all centres and virtually all subjects were frequently monitored.

WAEC officials also claimed that they have an efficient arrangement for collection and submission of examination materials. Information collected revealed that centres are created for this purpose and other sources such as the police stations. A practice they claim has been on for over two decades. Information further collected from supervisors substantiated this point; as it showed that for some secondary schools, Banks and Local Government Offices served as distribution centres. The distribution centres (most especially for secondary schools) were within 0—2.5 kms to the centres. In the views of WAEC officials, this arrangement was both time and cost-effective.

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent were materials available at the centres?

* Table 4 shows that in most of the centres, examination papers were sometimes enough in 50% and always enough in 42.9% of the centres. In most centres, 12(85.7%) answer scripts and other materials respectively were adequate all of the time while they were

Table 4: Availability of Materials at the Centres

In this Centre	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Examination papers are adequate	6 (42.9)	7 (50.0)	1 (7.1)
2. Answer sheets are adequate	12(85.7)	2 (14.3)	
3. Other materials are adequate	12(85.7)	2(14.3)	

sometimes inadequate in few centres (14.3) respectively. Subjects where shortages were observed were Economics Paper 2, Biology Paper 1 and 3 and Practical Agriculture.

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent were the examination regulations adhered to?

Table 5: Extent of Adherence to Examination Regulations

In this centre	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Candidates start exams as scheduled.	9(64.3)	5 (35.7)	—
2. All candidates are seated	2(14.3)	11(78.6)	1 (7.1)
3. Candidates come late	4 (28.6)	10(71.4)	—
4. Candidates are caught bringing materials to exam hall	6(42.9)	7(50.0)	1(7.1)
5. Candidates have been caught impersonating others	1 (7.1)	11(78.6)	2 (14.3)
6. Candidates have been exchanging materials in the exam all	1(7.1)	8 (57.1)	5 (35.7)
7. Rowdy sessions during the exam.	7(50.0)	7 (50.0)	

The analysis of results produced in Tables shows that in the centres sampled, only 9(64.3%) always and 5(35.7%) sometimes began examination as scheduled. Also, 11(78.6%) said all candidates were sometimes seated before examination begins. With respect to punctuality of candidates to the centre, results show that 10(71.4%) of the respondents said candidates sometimes come late.

On the extent to which there was peaceful conduct devoid of examination malpractice at the centres, results show that 7(50%) of the respondents said that candidates were sometimes caught bringing prepared materials to examination halls as against 6(42.9%) who said candidates were always involved. Impersonation and exchange of materials in the hall were sometimes identified by 11(78.6%) and 8(57.1%) of the respondents. Rowdy session at examination halls were experienced by 7(50%) of the centres.

Evaluation Question 5: What are the problems encountered by supervisors in the centres?

Problems reported by supervisors include harassment or even attacks of supervisors by candidates and their mercenaries after the completion of core subjects such of English Language, threats from candidates and their mercenaries, inadequate sitting facilities, late candidates begging to be allowed into the halls, candidates bringing charms to the examination hall, poor remuneration and breakdown of means of transportation.

Practical observation of the conduct of the WAEC examination revealed that in most cases the environment consisted of an examination hall and some classrooms. Usually 2 or 4 persons assisted the supervisors. Punctuality among candidates was high but few candidates came late and had to beg before they were allowed in if they were few minutes late except only when lateness was more than 30 minutes duration, which rarely happened.

In some centres, photo cards were checked before commencement of examinations while implicating materials were removed. This was followed by the distribution of examination scripts and questions. However, photo cards were checked in some centres after the commencement of the paper mostly in

afternoon papers. Most papers did not start exactly at the time scheduled. There were between 10 —20 minutes delay before commencement. Candidates were usually unruly shortly before the commencement and end of most papers. Candidates exchanged papers unnoticed by supervisors and assistants. For a 2 paper examination, the Paper 1 (multiple choice) was collected before Paper 2 (theory) the scripts were distributed. In few cases, candidates were not allowed to exhaust the time allocated to the papers (especially evening papers). Candidates were observed to have brought in textbooks, which were retrieved from them. In some centres, especially in Iwo (Osun State), a candidate was observed to have run out of the hall with a question paper and escaping the apprehension of security agents. Besides, mercenaries and thugs stood around the exam hall using all kinds of gimmicks to distract supervisors and alert candidates. Such distractions create avenue for security agents to get into the hall who in the pretence of issuing threats of arrest to troublesome candidates distribute the prepared materials to pre-specified candidates. Some vigilant candidates angrily protected the admittance of security agents into the halls.

Some candidates interviewed opined that security agents collude with some candidates and employ mercenaries to help them in writing the examinations and beat the recent effort by WAEC of embossing certificates. Such examination merchants, the candidates explained, escape out of the hall and later find their way back to submit the prepared answers with the connivance of security agents who serve as collaborators.

Discussion

The results suggest that most WAEC supervisors had some degree of supervision experience and were not neophytes. They are also adequately trained for the supervision job. Though they feared that their lives were in danger due to the inadequate security provided for the exercise. Provision against leakage of paper was perceived to be adequate by the supervisors.

The West African Examinations Council claims to have made adequate arrangement for the conduct of the examinations in a way that is both cost and time effective. WAEC seemed to have eased out administrative bottlenecks at

the Zonal Offices where materials by creating distribution centres which were close to examination centres and giving out adequate materials. Contrary to this claim, the situation on ground revealed that examination materials such as question papers were not adequate for some subjects such as Biology (Papers 1 and 3), Economics (Paper 2) and Practical Agriculture. These subjects had been taken when the evaluation officer got to the centre certain supervision regulations were strictly adhered to by supervisors. Among these were checking of photo card, collecting completed papers in parts and checking of attendance.

Nevertheless, with respect to the actual supervision of the examination, punctuality by candidates was not always 100% and commencement of examination was often behind time schedules. Candidates displayed various examination malpractices ranging from bringing prepared materials, exchange of materials among candidates to impersonation. Rowdy sessions were common at most centres. Some of the misbehaviors were identified and the candidates were cautioned. Evidence however showed that many were not identified or were ignored by supervisors and their assistants.

On the nature of problems encountered at her centres presented here in order of severity and frequency, supervisors reported harassment (attacks) on them usually preceding the completion of core subjects, threats, inadequate sitting facilities, candidates coming late for examination, possession of charms, poor remuneration and transportation problems. None of the supervisors officially reported any of malpractices perpetrated by students as problems encountered. Despite the attempts by supervisors to curtail the level of malpractice in the halls through proper searching, their level of vigilance was inexplicably poor or could pass for non-challance as a result of fear of being of molested. Candidates elicit the assistance of mercenaries and some security agents for a fee and their touts hang around the hall waiting to cause trouble and alert their clients as to when to expect the ready made answers. Such security agents assigned to the centres are not vigilant even when they are more than one, they seldom position themselves in different areas for effective monitoring of the centre.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conducting an evaluative study of an ongoing examination process of this nature does not only reveal what is the status of the exercise on ground by providing valuable information on the strengths and weaknesses observed but information that would aid decision making on the part of the organizers are provided for proper management of the activities.

Recommendations are made in the light of the identified good and weak points of the conduct of the external WASSCE as follows:

1. Actual number of candidates who applied for a particular subject should be known and a list compiled to forestall shortage of papers;
2. Security should be beefed up especially in large centres;
3. Security agents should be scrutinized before employment and those found to have dubious character should be dropped. Besides, the recruited ones should be warned of the possible consequences if caught aiding and abetting crimes at examination centres. Also, rewards could be used as motivation.
4. Proper monitoring at regular intervals by WAEC officers should be intensified.
- 5 Impersonators that are caught should not only be handed over to the police but should have their deeds published in the national dailies to serve as deterrent to others.
6. Innovation should be introduced into the mode of administering WAEC examinations by ensuring the seating arrangement are some feet away from each other.
7. Ensure that facilities are available in the chosen centres before the commencement of examinations.

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