

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE CONDUCT OF SENIOR SCHOOL
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN LAGOS, OGUN AND OYO STATES OF
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The senior school certificate examinations in Nigeria have been a focus of discussion both by academics and the media. The discussion is on the conduct of the Senior School Certificate Examinations and rampant examination malpractice, late release of students' results, cancellation of results and poor performance of candidates. This array of problems and accusations call for a thorough evaluation of the public examination system in Nigeria. This study therefore attempts to answer some basic questions: How do teachers perceive the conduct of senior secondary school certificate examinations? What factors do teachers perceive to be affecting the conduct of the examinations? Is there any difference in the perception of teachers in the three states as regards sex, age, and experience? One hundred and thirty six secondary school teachers in Lagos, Ogun and Oyo States in Western Nigeria were involved in the study. The results of this study revealed that there is no significant difference in the response of the teachers from the three states.

Introduction

Public examinations are conducted on behalf of the state and open to all those who meet defined entry criteria within the society (World Bank Group, 2001). They include examinations used to select those wishing to enter government service; state schools; and other educational institutions. They also include primary school leaving certificate examinations, secondary school certificate examinations (e.g. WAEC/NECO examinations) and examinations used for selection to Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (as JAMB UME or PCE). Public examinations are more or less external examinations

and are highly competitive. However, public examinations are different from school examinations, which are more or less internal and used for promotion and other purposes.

Public examinations started with the civil service some 2000 years ago in China and were later introduced into the school system in the 18th century. In Nigeria however, the story is not quite different. Public examinations also started with the civil service in the 19th century when the colonial government introduced it to select qualified people into the civil service. In the early 20th century, public examinations were introduced into the school system. The Cambridge Intermediate Examination was introduced into the school system; and later the London University introduced the GCE O' and A' Levels for external/private candidates. In 1952, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) was established after the acceptance of the Jeffery report by the colonial governments in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, to conduct or determine examinations required in the public interest and to award appropriate certificates, provided that the certificates did not represent lower standards of attainment than equivalent certificates of examining authorities in the United Kingdom (WAEC, 2001 a). Subsequently WAEC introduced the West African School Certificate Examinations to the secondary school system to replace the Cambridge Intermediate Examinations.

As at today, WAEC conducts four categories of examinations. National examinations for the specific countries; international examinations for candidates in all the member countries (e.g. West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE); General Certificate Examination (GCE) —Advanced Level Examinations; and (iv) The Joint Examination for the School Certificate /GCE Ordinary Level. According to WAEC report on its examinations, the WASSCE was introduced in 1998 as part of the educational reform programmes of the member countries, and it is administered twice a year in May/June and November/December (WAEC, 2001b). The WASSCE replaced the Senior School Certificate Examination SSCE/GCE Ordinary Level, which was phased out in 1999. The WASSCE is expected to combine school based Continuous Assessment results with the Council's own assessment on a ratio of 30:70 (WAEC, 2001 b).

The National Examinations Council (NECO) on the other hand, was established in 1998 to complement WAEC in conducting Senior School Certificate Examinations for secondary schools and private/external candidates. The body conducts examinations only for the Nigerian school system. Its mode of examinations is not quite different from that of WAEC.

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), unlike WAEC and NECO, conducts placement or selection examinations. It was established in 1978 to conduct entrance examinations for candidates seeking admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These are the University Matriculation Examination (UME), for those seeking admission into the university and the Polytechnic/Colleges of Education Examination (PCE) for applicants to Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education. JAMB also engages in the admission of direct entry students to universities.

There are also the National Board for Technical Education Certificate Examination (NABTECE) for those in the Technical Colleges; various State Ministries of Education conducting both First School Leaving Certificate at the end of primary education and the Junior School Certificate Examinations at the end of Junior Secondary Three (JS3); National Teachers' Institute Examinations for its distance-learning candidates (Grade Two and NCE); and professional examinations conducted by various professional bodies (e.g. ICAN, ANAN, NIPM, NIM).

The Senior School Certificate examinations are usually conducted for students in SS3 (final year of senior secondary education). The purpose of the examination is for certification of the students' level of education and for evaluation of the performance of the school *and/or* teachers (World Bank 2004). The age range of students that sit for the examination is between 15 and 19 years. The students are expected to register for a minimum of six subjects and a maximum of nine subjects. The students are expected to choose from two subject categories. The first category comprises the compulsory/core subjects: English, Mathematics, 1 Science, 1 Nigerian Language, 1 Social Science and 1 Vocational subjects; and the second category includes the electives. There are

other subjects that students can choose from to make up the required minimum or maximum subjects that could be registered for. Examples are: Literature in English, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, CRK, IRK etc. The results of the senior school certificate examination are released after 3 to 4 months of writing the papers. Students who fail the examination are given the opportunity to retake in most cases as external candidates. The SSCE is used for university entrance admission decisions.

Though there has not been much in the literature on the assessment of public examination in Nigeria. there has been a call to assess the following aspects of its conduct (National News, 2003), especially the Senior Secondary School Examinations:

- (i) Examination malpractice, which has assumed the center stage of public discourse;
- (ii) Late release of students' results;
- (iii) Withholding/cancellation of students' results;
- (iv) Poor performance of students in the SSCE.

Onyechere, the founder and executive chairman of the Exam Ethics Project (EEP) was reported to have observed that:

it is a straightforward issue. When you have an educational system in which almost all the people in all the sectors are involved in cutting the corners, not just students but parents also encourage students; we are talking about teachers, principals, supervisors and invigilators and we are talking about a situation whereby there is malpractice in primary schools. (Vanguard Newspaper Thursday March 04, 2004).

Another Newspaper, This Day (2003) also reported that invigilators, supervisors, parents or lecturers specialize in examination fraud. Syndicates and

officials entrusted with the responsibility of conducting examinations were all indicted in that year's JAMB examination.

The allegation of late-release of results has always been levied against WAEC, for some time but since the entry of NECO into the conduct and administration of the situation has improved. According to WAEC press release in 2003, the council conducts its examinations as at when due and reduce the period of waiting for the results to the barest minimum (WAEC, 2003 p.1). Apart from delays withheld results reported by WAEC was a total of 56,274 representing 5.1% of the entire registered candidates. The claim was that their results were being withheld because of examination malpractices.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the array of problems that arose from the conduct of public examinations, this study therefore investigated secondary school teachers' perceptions of the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations in three states in the southwestern part of Nigeria. The following research questions were addressed:

- i. How do the teachers perceive the conduct of senior secondary school certificate examinations?
- ii. What factors do teachers perceive as affecting the conduct of these examinations?
- iii. Is there any difference in the perception of the teachers in the three states due to sex, age, and experience (i.e. years of teaching experience)?

Methodology

Teachers in Lagos, Ogun and Oyo States (Southwest Nigeria) formed the population under investigation but 136 were sampled for use. All of them responded to the questionnaire. Distribution of teachers sampled from the three states was as follows: Lagos (40); Ogun (36); and Oyo (60). The sample included 71 male and 65 female teachers. The years of experience of the teachers are as follows: 0-4(5.1%); 5-9 (27.7%); 10-14 (25.5%); 15+ (40.1%). And years of experience of teaching the SS3 class are: 0-4 yrs. (15.3%); 5-9yrs (35%); 10-14(26.3%); 15+ (8.8%) and No response (14.6%). Besides, 16.8% of the

teachers had 0-4 years experience as SSCE examiners; 21.9% (5-9 years.), 10.9% (10-14 years.) and 5.1% (above 15 years.) and 45.3% (did not have any marking experience).

A 36-item questionnaire was used to survey the teachers' perception of the conduct of SSCE examinations in secondary schools. The questionnaire was in three sections. Section A was on background information— sex, age, teacher's position, teaching experience and marking experience in public examinations. Section B was on teachers' perception relating to

- a) the preparation and setting of questions;
- b) administration of examination, and
- c) marking, collation and release of results. Section C expected the teacher to freely express their opinions on the conduct of SSCE.

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.85 The questionnaire was administered on the teachers of SS3 involved in the conduct SSCE. The teachers were asked to assess the conduct of SSCE examinations by WAEC and NECO since they are involved in the teaching of students, invigilation of the examinations, marking and grading of students' scripts. It is therefore pertinent for these teachers to assess the conduct of these examinations. Moreover, they are part of those accused of being involved in examination malpractice. Two hundred questionnaires were sent to teachers in three states but only 136 were returned, duly completed. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyse the data. The descriptive, t-test and ANOVA Statistics were used for the quantitative analysis.

Findings

Table I shows that there was no significant difference in the perception of the teachers from the three states $F = .786$ at $p < 0.5$. ; Age: $F = .435$ at $p < 0.5$; Years of Experience: $F = 2.658$ at $p > 0.5$; Position of Teachers: $F = 2.179$ at $p > 0.5$. Also there was no significant difference in the perception of the teachers based on their sex: $t = 1.303$, $df = 134$ at $p < .05$. But there was a significant difference in the perception of the teachers based on the number of years they have been teaching SS3 class.

Table 1***Analysis of Variance of Perception of teachers according to Age, State, Years of Experience and Position***

Age	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	sig
Between Groups	41.022	3	13.674	.435	.728 ^{ns}
Within Groups	4182.876	133	31.450		
Total	4223.898	136			
State					
Between Groups	48.998	2	24.495	.786	.458 ^{ns}
Within Groups	4174.908	134	31.156		
Total	4223.898	136			
Years of Teaching Experience					
Between Groups	314.827	4	78.707	2.658	.036 ^{ns}
Within Groups	3909.071	132	29.614		
Total	4223.898	136			
Position					
Between Groups	261.591	4	65.398	2.179	.075 ^{ns}
Within Groups	3962.307	132	30.017		
Total	4223.898	136			
Years of Teaching SS3					
Between Groups	402.904	4	100.726	3.480	.010 ^s
Within Groups	3820.994	132	28.947		
Total	4223.898	136			

Teachers written response to questions on the conduct of SSCE in the secondary school system was qualitatively analyzed. The analysis is presented as follows:

Question 32: State some probable sources of examination leakage?

The teachers identified the following sources:

	% of Response
i. The WAEC/NECO Supervisors	85%
ii. The WAEC/NECO Officials	83.5%
iii. The subject teachers and school invigilators	75%
iv. Bank Officials	60%
v. Parents	52.5%
vi. Students— both external and internal students	50%
vii. Printing Companies used by the examination bodies	40%

Question 33: State those that aid students to cheat during examinations.

The teachers identified the following people:

.- The subject teachers/school invigilators	1
- WAEC/NECO Supervisors	2
'- Parents	3
- Students—especially external students	4
- Community	5
Bank officials	5
Policemen (that are assigned to schools for security)	6

Question 34: Explain the role of WAEC/NECO Supervisors in the conduct of examinations.

The teachers explained the roles of the Supervisors as thus:

- a To supervise the conduct of examination
- b. To bring examination materials to examination halls

c. To report any malpractice during examinations

Question 35: What are the roles of schools and teachers in the conduct of SSCE?

The teachers explained the roles of schools and teachers as:

- The school is to provide conducive environment for the examination (including human and material resources)
- The teachers are to teach the students and to make sure that they are well prepared for the examination
- The teachers are to invigilate the examinations

• **Question 36: State how the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations can be improved.**

The teachers suggested the following:

1. Schools should not register external candidates
2. Effective monitoring of both Supervisors and Invigilators during the examinations by the examination bodies
3. Adequate education and enlightenment of teachers, students, parents and community on the importance of the examination.
4. Providing a conducive environment for learning and teaching, and for the examinations
5. Offenders in examination malpractice should be seriously punished.
6. Teachers, supervisors and invigilators should be committed to the conduct of the examinations.
7. Examinations should start at the same time in all the centres.
8. Experienced teachers should be involved in the invigilation.
9. Security should be provided around the examination centres.

The study also revealed the involvement of teachers in the conduct of senior school certificate examinations. Table 2 shows that 78.8% of the teachers were involved in the invigilation of the senior school certificate examinations, while 55.5% were involved in the marking of SSCE; and only 24.1% (i.e. 15.3% & 8.8% for WAEC and NECO respectively) were involved in the setting of SSCE questions

Table 2: Teachers involvement in the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations

INVOLVEMENT	WAEC %	NECO %	ALL EXAMS %	NOT INVOLVED %
Setting of SSCE Questions	15.3	8.8	-	75.9
Invigilation	11.7	5.8	61.3	21.2
Marking of SSCE Exams	13.1	3.6	38.7	44.5

Discussion

Results revealed that the secondary school teachers involved in the study were not different in their perception of the SSCE. Examination bodies, the police, the banks, schools and the teachers are found to be involved in the conduct of SSCE. The schools are expected to provide conducive environment for the examination, provide invigilators and make sure that the students are well prepared for the examinations; while the teachers are involved in the teaching of the students, setting of questions, invigilation of the examinations and marking of examinations scripts.

The study also revealed that the teachers/invigilators, supervisors, WAEC/NECO officials and students are more involved in such examination malpractices as question leakages and cheating during the examinations. The teachers perceive that parents, the community, policemen that are supposed to provide security during the examination, and bank officials, who work in banks that keep the questions are also involved in these examination malpractices. This study therefore showed that the problem of examination

malpractice is a societal one, that is, every sector of the society is more or less involved in examination malpractice. The observation made by the teachers was not different from the report made by National News (2003) when it reported on Mr. Ike Onyechere's statement that invigilators, parents, lecturers, specialize in examination fraud.

The teachers' suggestions on how to improve the conduct of SSCE should be considered. Some of these suggestions include: schools should not register external candidates, effective monitoring of both Supervisors and Invigilators during the examinations by the examination bodies, adequate education and enlightenment of teachers, students, parents and community on the importance of the examination, providing a conducive environment for learning and teaching and for the examinations, those engaging in acts of examination malpractices should be punished and teachers, supervisors and invigilators should be committed to the conduct of the examinations. Security should be provided around the examination centres.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations can be categorized into three. These are: (i) The preparation and setting of questions; (ii) Administration of examinations, which include supervision, bringing of materials to examination halls, invigilation, writing and collection of examination materials etc. (iii) Marking, collation of results and release of results. The examination bodies have major roles to play because they are supposed to prepare and set questions; employ supervisors; bring materials and question papers to the examination halls, organize the marking, collation and release of result while the schools are supposed to provide invigilators, examination halls, and register students for examinations.

The examination bodies and the schools should cooperate to ensure that Senior School Certificate Examinations are conducted under a conducive environment; organize workshops for both supervisors and invigilators. As teachers suggested, the examination bodies should embark on adequate education and enlightenment of teachers, students, parents and community on

the importance of the examination. Besides, it is very important that the examination bodies have an effective and secure administrative system in the conduct of public examinations. Question papers should be prepared and printed under strict security and delivered to the candidate's desk at the appointed time (World Bank, 2001). However, significant improvements in efficiency and cost effectiveness can be gained by the use of modern technology.

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