

Evaluation and Way Forward for Improvement of Public Examination in Nigeria Secondary Schools

Dr. Gabriel A. Okafor¹

Department of Science and Computer Education, Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *One of the most disturbing challenges in our education industry today is the dismal poor performance of candidates/students in the public examination bodies such as WAEC, NECO and NABTEB. It was describe as a National shame as it was noted that Ghanaian candidates have be winning all WAEC international awards in the recent time leaving Nigeria candidate far behind. May/June 2014 WASSCE was described as a catastrophe as the report from the head of National Office of WAEC confessed that there was a marginal decline in performance this year when compared with results in 2012 and 2013. This paper therefore sought to investigate the attitude of principals and teachers towards open book examination as a means of improving candidates/students performance in public exams. Simple survey method was employed in a total of twenty five schools comprising thirteen public and twelve private schools. A total of twenty five principals and fifty teachers were used; the friendly principal and teachers indicated high positive attitude towards the use of open book examination as a means of improving candidate's performance in public examinations.*

Keywords: *Assessment, Examination, Open book, Performance, Students*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the recent time, one of the most popular themes in the education press is a steady assault on either internal or public examinations which most often results on ceases or General poor performance among the examination candidates. At a time, the attack was on the examination bodies such as West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) or National Examination Council (NECO). Apart from attack on leakage of examination papers, there those on the entire concept which is often considered rigid, unfair or restriction upon teacher's freedom to plan. Today, the attack has shuffled to so many spheres. The continuous assessment (CA) provided by the National Policy on Education as a way of improving the evaluation system has been relegated to the background by the teachers who have no time for the exercise. For instance, [1] appraised the use of continuous assessment in three schools in Uzor Uwani LGA of Enugu State fourteen years after its introduction. He observed that at that period, the teachers were only aware of the program but lacked the commitment to implement it. The situation at present is worse; as teachers and principals just manipulate score and send to the examination bodies for the final computation of students' final examination results.

According to [2], no fewer than one million Nigeria students failed the 2014 West Africa Senior Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The result was described as the poorest result recorded in the last three years. Result released by the WAEC left many students and their parents in tears 1,176,551 out 1,705,976 candidates that sat for the exam fell below the minimum requirement for admission into university. Details of the result indicated that only 529,425 candidates (31.2%) out of 1.7 million candidates who wrote the exam obtained credits in five subjects and above, including English and Mathematics.

Ironically, within that period, Ghanaian candidates dominated the three positions at the international award for best candidates in the five member countries of WAEC. The breakdown of May/June 2014 results released by the exam body revealed that about 68.72% of candidates failed the exam. According to [3] who is the head of National Office a total of 1,705,976 candidates registered for the exam, out of which 1,692,435 comprising 929,075 male and 763,360 female candidate sat for the school examination, out of this number 1,605,613 candidate representing 94.87% have their result fully released while 86,822 candidates representing 5.13% have a few of their subjects still being processed due to some errors mainly traceable to these candidate and their schools in the course of registration or writing the exam.

The head of national office confessed that there was a marginal decline in performance when compared to the result of 2012 and 2013. Aside the poor result recorded in this year's WASSCE, previous performance of candidates have never been cheering. For instance in the Nov/Dec 2012 WASSCE, 150,615 (37.97%) out of 413,266 candidates obtained five credits including English Language and Mathematics. In 2013 Nov/Dec WASSCE, only 86,612 candidates representing 29.17% out of 308,217 that wrote the exam passed the exam with five credits including English language and mathematics. The release of May/June 2014 WASSCE provoked more concern on the declining performance on Nigeria students over the years. Although WAEC management pointed accusing fingers on parents other stakeholders thought otherwise; as they blamed the government, teachers and parents alike for the mass failure.

Way forward for improvement of public examinations, examinations have remained the major way by which we check how far our educational objectives have been achieved. The question therefore is how can we improve the performance of our students in both internal and public examination rather than trading blames on the stakeholder's. This work sought to find out the attitude of both the teachers and students to open book examination as a means of improving performance in public examinations. Open book examination is the method by which students/candidates are allowed into examination halls with text books of their choices and are allowed to make references to those books answering questions posed to them. Open book examination calls for a more commitment approach on the side of teachers. It requires the teachers reading far and above their students; being abreast with the current trends and issues about their subjects and setting more of applied question that are not directly treated in the student's texts.

The study therefore studied the attitude of teachers and principals towards the use of open book examination in improving the candidate performances in public examinations. The major question raised is as states below;

1.1 Research Question

What is the attitude of teachers and principals to open book examination?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a method of simply survey so as to make it possible for enough schools to be covered within the time frame for the study.

2.1 Instrument

A set questionnaire was use for the data collection among the teachers and principals. Reliability was built into the questionnaire by relating each item to a specific attitude under investigation that is; how open book examination can improve performance in public exams.

2.2 Area of study

The study was conducted within Abakaliki, urban area; this is to include enough public and private schools.

2.3 Population

The population consists of twelve private schools and thirteen public schools in the area of study.

2.4 Sampling and Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling strategy was used to draw a sample of 25 principal and vice principals and 50 teacher from both private and public schools under the study.

TABLE 2.1: SAMPLE FRAME FOR STRATIFIED RANDOM SAMPLE SELECTION OF SCHOOLS, PRINCIPAL AND TEACHERS

School status	No of school	No of principal	No of teachers
Public	13	13	25
Private	12	12	25
Total	25	25	50

TABLE 2.2: PRINCIPAL'S ATTITUDE TO OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION

Statement	Response	Frequency	%frequency
Open book Exam will to a Exam will to a Great extent Improve students' performance in Public exam	Strongly agree	14	56
	Agree	8	32
	Disagree	2	8
	Strongly disagree	1	4
	Undecided	0	0
	Total	25	100%

TABLE 2.3: TEACHERS ATTITUDE TO OPEN BOOK EXAMINATION

Statement	Response	Frequency	%Frequency
Open book will to a great extent Improve students' Performance in public Examination	Strongly agree	23	46
	Agree	16	36
	Disagree	6	12
	Strongly disagree	2	4
	Undecided	1	2
	Total	2	100

III. DISCUSSION

In answering the research question, the study shows that a high proportion of principals expressed positive attitude towards the use of open book examination as a means of improving the student's performance in public examination. As shown above, 88% of the principals indicated high degree of agreement to open book examination as they equally believe that this will reduce cheating and rigorous invigilation during examination. Only 12% of the sampled principal disagreed as shown in table 2 above.

In table 3, 82% of the teachers sample showed high degree of agreement that open book examination will boost candidates/students performance in public examination.

This finding is in line with the believe that the use of aids during examinations whenever practicable is an idea which in recent years is earning the consideration of examination boards. In geography for instance, such aids might include maps, atlas and text book. However, the use of sources of references in examination could support the belief that such material would provide students with opportunities to discuss and reason intelligently instead of pouring unto papers as much as they could recall of their reading [4].

IV. CONCLUSION

Teachers have obligations to provide their students with best instruction possible. This implies that they must have some procedures where they can reliably and validly evaluate their students. The present system of evaluation in our school system should be revisited. A close look at the continuous assessment provided in national policy on education reveals that what actually goes on where it exists is "continuous testing"

Therefore in order to cultivate sound examination ethics, all forms of examinations in our education system must encourage independent of thought and judgment in students to select appropriate learning experiences; these are qualities found in open book examination approach. This method of assessment should therefore be popularized among the serving teachers and principals of schools through seminars, workshop and conferences.

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