

PLANNING AND MANAGING CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT/ EXAMINATIONS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

Effective management of examinations is very important in all public secondary school in Nigeria and Akwa Ibom State. For the public secondary school principals to train students that would measure –up in quality with global education, the paper dealt with planning and managing continuous assessment/examinations in terms of; concepts of continuous assessment/examination, concepts of planning and management and problems affecting planning and managing examinations. The authors proffered solutions to the identified problems and recommended them to principals for effective management of continuous assessment/examination in public secondary schools in the study area.

Keywords: Planning, management, continuous assessment and examinations.

Introduction

Secondary school administration could be defined as the systematic arrangement of human and material resources to achieve educational goals. Secondary education goals according to National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) states that secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for: (a) useful living within the society; and (b) higher education. According to Oyewole (2006), the principal is the chief executive officer in the Nigerian secondary school system. The principal performs a good number of administrative functions in his effort to achieve goals and objectives which in the context of this paper captured him/her as the chief planner and manager of continuous assessment and examinations.

Continuous assessment (CA) is an innovative approach to the process of secondary education management in Nigeria. According to Amadi (2013) continuous assessment is a comprehensive and systematic process of using relevant assessment techniques and tools to determine the overall progress of students over period of time. One of the benefits of continuous assessment is that it helps to address examination tension and anxiety and check malpractice among students.

Before now, the methods of assessing students' progress in academic performance was based on two methods of assessment namely; internal and external assessment. The former was the type of examination or test conducted at the end of every two weeks during the school year. This is known as the end of terms examination, and this assessment is still carried out today in secondary schools across Nigeria; but with some modifications called continuous assessment (CA) system.

The other type of examination which is currently in use in our secondary school system is the external examination conducted by some examination bodies like National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Examination Council (WAEC) for junior/senior secondary school students in final year classes. This forms of evaluation had its limitations which affected the secondary schools students.

The National policy on Education FGN (2013) stipulates that Junior School Certificate (JSC) shall be based on continuous assessment and Examination Board (NECO). The senior school certificate (SSC) shall be based on continuous assessment and a national examination conducted by NECO and WAEC. The purpose of Nigeria using public examination bodies (NECO & WAEC) for conducting national examinations is to ensure uniform standards and quality of certificate issued for passing such examinations.

The task of managing continuous assessment and examination system in secondary schools in Nigeria to some extent is practically very cumbersome. In planning and managing continuous assessment/examination resources in many schools posed an up-hill task on the principals for successful implementation of evaluation of students due to some of these problems:-

- Delay in processing of examination materials.
- Errors in calculation of quantitative resources
- Inadequate provision of exam materials
- Student /teachers involvement in examination malpractices
- Non keeping of proper records of continuous assessment by some teachers.
- Students' lateness to examination venues and inadequate continuous assessment booklet/rewards of students.
- Lack of functional computers to compute continuous assessment score of students.

In the context of this paper continuous assessment is the educational policy in which students are examined continuously over a period of their engagement in schooling, the results of which are taken into account after leaving school. Sometimes, it is often proposed or used as an alternative to a final examination system (Wikipedia, 2016). Some of the characteristics of continuous assessment are that, it

is regular assessment of the learning performance related to a course module and that is separate from examination and accompanied by regular feedback.

Continuous assessment can take various forms, depending on the final objectives and competencies of the school managers. The continuous assessment partially counts towards the final mark for the course; and often goes hand in hand with information about the assessment criteria.

Purposes of assessment in teaching and learning include:

- Assessment/examinations aim at giving an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling.
- Assessment/examination can also be used to ascertain whether a specified standard of knowledge or performance has been reached. On this point, Akinpelu in Ugodulunwa (2002) asserted that examinations set standards for students to achieve and for teachers to use in preparation for their students.
- Continuous assessment/examination is used as valid instrument for grading and sorting individuals according to quality of performance.
- They are used for selection of candidates into different institutions of learning, promotion of students from one level to another and promotion of workers.
- Examination and different forms of attitude testing are used for employment purposes in contemporary Nigeria.
- Assessment/examinations are also used for certification of candidate who had successfully completed a certain level of training.
- Examinations can also serve the purpose of monitoring educational progress.

Concept of planning: Planning in the context of this paper is a process of deciding in advance, the specific future course of action to be adopted with a view to maximum use of limited organizational resources for specific goal attainment. Planning may also be viewed as:

- a process of making rational choice;
- a process of making increment changes;
- a strategy of decision making controlled by politics and the exercise of power; and
- transaction with decision reached as a result of dialogue (Olubor, 2004). The chain of management functions begins with planning; it is the fundamental function on which other functions are built. The success of every school manager depends on initial planning.

Educational planning according to Ogunsanwa in Ayemi (2009) is a process of making short and long-range decision that will guide administrators in the education sector in arriving at the defined goals. Therefore, educational planning prepares the ground for educational administrator to operate. In the context of this paper, the need for educational planning is to collect, collate, and interpret data and information on the educational system.

Concept of Management: Management is that function of an organization that concerns the co-ordination and co-operation necessary for goal attainment. The major functions identified in educational management include planning, controlling, communicating, directing, leading and reporting (Aigboje, 2013). To explain the area of school management that is relevant to this study Aigboje (2013) asserted that students' management is that function of school management that is designed to secure students admission and train them for skills and knowledge essential for the accomplishment of the goal of the organization. From the definition by Aigboje (2013) it could be seen that student services management is relevant to planning and managing continuous assessment and examination in secondary schools as the major focus of this paper.

Students' services management is an indispensable and functional task of the school head, which is synonymous with continuous assessment and examination management. Every school exists because of students and without them there would not be any school. So because of this, the students are at the centre of school management process especially as it concerns their examination/certification management. As stipulated in the National policy on education (FGN, 2013), the critical issue in education relates to the quality of the end products of schooling testified to by certificates obtained through passing examinations, well planned and managed for that purpose.

The main reason for establishment of secondary schools is to make sure that students are graduating with results which are fulfilling the broad goals of secondary education in Nigeria, (FGN, 2013) which are:

- i. To prepare individual for useful living within the society and
- ii. To prepare individual for higher education. Therefore, it is on the basis of this that planning and managing continuous assessment/ examination by public secondary schools principals in the study area should not be treated with levity.

Planning and managing continuous assessment and examination:

The issue of planning and managing continuous assessment and examination in 241 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria remains the most challenging administrative duty of the principals. According to Idoko (2015), the task of holding examinations as may be required by the State Ministry of Education for promotion of students or any other purposes as the Ministry may direct and reporting the progress of students to parents or guardians every school term is one of the functions of the principals. Planning for internal and external examinations and managing the proper conduct in giving three tests per term for continuous assessment also took a greater chunk of administrative time of every school principal.

In every secondary school, examination management must be taken seriously, and a skillful principal has to employ all the administrative techniques possible to conduct successful examinations. At this point, the principal has to delegates some aspects of the examination preparations/management duties to the vice principal and the school examination committee. An examination committee must be constituted to handle all examination issues under the chairmanship of the VP academic – closely supervised by the principal as chief examiner. An examination time- table is always necessary for orderliness and effectiveness in the conduct of school examinations. Schools usually appoint members of staff who are of very high integrity as school examination officers as well as invigilators. These officers so appointed take charge of both internal and external examination in every school.

In managing external examinations, for example the West African School Certificate, National Examination Council (NECO) and Junior School Certificate Examination conducted by State Ministry of Education, the principal must supervise closely what the Vice principal academic does in preparation for the examinations. It is the responsibility of the principal to inform all intending candidates, through the VP academics, all the requirements, for all the external examinations. All the students must be properly registered for the examinations based on that examination rules and regulation. The arrangement of halls and seats, laboratories equipments, and all materials for practical must be well arranged before the examination dates.

On the issue of internal examination planning and management, the school principal had to plan ahead of time and source for the money to be used in conducting examination for the three terms. The costing has to be done before the examination is conducted, and prudent management of examination

materials must also be taken into consideration. The VP academic must ensure that the production of exam papers is done in time, in sufficient numbers and very importantly prevent leakages. At the same time, the answer scripts for students must be enough, and after each exam, the scripts must reach the subject teacher same day (Akpakwu, 2012).

Managing examination in schools may not lack some problems but a competent administrator who plans everything about exam ahead overcomes all with ease. However, all cases of malpractice during the conduct of internal examinations are reported to the principal, who then will forward such cases to the schools' disciplinary committee for necessary disciplinary action. Students who misbehave in external examination have been known to form the habit during their schools' internal examination when their principals, are not serious about effective planning and management of examinations. Some cases of wrong handling of examination papers and inadequate invigilation have been reported about some schools (Udoh and Akpa, 2010).

According to Onuka (2009), the students' component of resource management in education has several dimensions, but managing students –examinations and their successful exit from secondary schools to higher institutions had been the challenging task of every school principal in Nigeria. Resourcefulness in planning and managing examinations by principals facilitates the smooth administration of the school system and yields required benefits to the society.

The introduction of continuous assessment in Nigeria secondary school system affords the teachers opportunities for participation in both internal and external examination of the students. However, the magnitude of work involved in this operation of continuous assessment in school requires that the teachers should be prepared to meet the challenges posed by their work load (Obi, 2003). Also, the principals are involved in managing and planning for the proper conduct of the series of tests by providing materials, monitoring the teachers in administering the tests marking and recording of the test scores in the continuous assessment booklets for individual student.

Effective planning and management of continuous assessment and examinations:

In order to manage examination ethics in public secondary schools effectively, the principals according to Amadi (2013) have to perform the following functions.

- Provide adequate teaching learning facilities as well as regular maintenance of same to enhance effective teaching – learning. This will ensure that the students attain the expected standard for particular examination and the temptation to cheat in such examination will be greatly reduced.
- School principals need to evolve strict measures and elaborate security regulation in the planning and management examination (e.g. development of examination questions, marking of scripts, processing of results, and issuance of terminal results to students, parents.
- Principals as trained administrator must effectively manage internal examination in the following ways; demand and collect from teachers two set of question papers which must be drafted at the beginning of the term to be stored safely in the question bank by the principal. At the appropriate time for examination, it is the duty of the principal to supervise the selection of questions for the examination.
- For the principals to succeed in exam management in secondary schools, teachers' motivation may not be forgotten. At the same time committed teachers in the exam board must be given some incentives by the principal in order to spur them for effective performance.
- In order to succeed in exam management, principals must execute severe punishment on students and teaching/non-teaching staff who are involved in examination malpractice in secondary schools.

Existing sanctions against culprits should be well communicated to members of staff and students before commencement of every examination, so that any defaulter would not have any excuse.

- The school principals who want to succeed in managing examination, well in their schools, must direct and supervise the counseling units in the school to mount effective and regular campaigns against examination malpractices and other vices that can threaten proper management of exam. By so doing, students would develop confidence to face any examination conditions.
- Involvement of parents and guardians in exam management by principals is necessary because of their strategic position in school administration. The schools' heads need to hold regular Parent Teachers Association meetings (PTA) to dissuade them from involvement in examination malpractice in schools.
- The principals in public secondary schools in the study area need not forget their enormous task of continuous assessment proper implementation as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013). However, they have to monitor the operation of continuous assessment and ensure that the programme is systematic, comprehensive cumulative and guidance oriented. Effective planning and management of the continuous assessment helps teachers to identify strength and weaknesses of students, faulty curriculum and poor supervisory methods of the principals. The urge to cheat in examination which arises from poor teaching and learning could be minimized

Written tests or examination given at the end of teaching, and its procedures well managed will enable the school head and teachers to know the areas where special attention should be paid in a particular subject (Oboegbulem, 2014).

Problems of planning and managing examinations public schools:

It is pertinent at this point to remunerate the impediments to proper management of examinations as envisaged by the authors of this paper to include:

1. Population explosion in public secondary schools because of free education policy of Government.
2. Inadequate provision of ICT facilities/ power supply
3. School security challenges (abduction of school teachers and students).
4. Breakdown in school –community relations
5. Lack of qualified teachers in specialized subjects
6. Inadequate provision and lack of maintenance of school facilities
7. Socio-economic background of parents (poverty/economic recession).
8. Inadequate funding of education affects proper continuous assessment/exam management.
9. Examination malpractice by staff and students.
10. Cultism–students indiscipline – students' riot.
11. Workers unrest – strike actions by teachers affect examinations management.
12. Multiplicity of educational programmes (all kinds of sandwich and continuing education, adult and non formal education may be of grave consequences to examination management
13. Political instability and frequent changes in educational policies affect examination management
14. Lack of formal orientation for the new principals. It has been observed that there is no systematic way of giving new principals of public secondary schools orientation before posting them to schools to head schools. There is no doubt that this will definitely lead to trial and error strategy on examination management issues.
15. Irregular payment of salaries of teachers in public secondary schools posed negative impact on examination management.

Strategies for effective management of continuous assessment/examinations in public secondary schools (recommendations)

Secondary education administration is faced with myriads of problems as well as lack planning/management of examinations in public secondary schools as previously enumerated by the authors of this paper. For effective management of examination in schools, the following strategies are suggested and recommended by the authors:

1. Concise population of students for each school should be taken seriously through reforms on admission policies as formulated by the state Ministry of Education, State secondary Education Board, and State Universal Basic Education Board.
2. Based on the importance of effective planning for examination, it is recommended that trained educational planners be posted to all public secondary schools to exact their professional expertise to sort out problem of examination planning and management.
3. Increase surveillance on school security by all stakeholders in secondary education management in the state.
4. Adequate funding of education is here recommended because lofty planning ideas of the school principals cannot be implemented without adequate funds from the Government.
5. Training and retraining of school administrators and teachers especially in ICT usage should be made mandatory for effective management of examination in public secondary school in Akwa Ibom State.
6. Recruitment of qualified teachers in science education- ICT introductory technology should be pursued with vigor to reverse lopsidedness of grammar subjects in public schools.
7. Motivation of teachers –regular payment of their salaries should be given needed attention by the government to check the frequent strike actions by teachers.
8. Provision and maintenance of school facilities especially ICT equipment (computers) should be a priority of Government for effective management of examinations
9. Provision of electricity to all public secondary schools in the state is a panacea for effective examination management.
10. School – community relations should be well managed by school administrators and make it sustainable because hostile school communities affect examination management negatively.
11. Training workshops and seminars should be organized by state ministry of education and secondary education board on examination planning/management for newly appointed principals.

Conclusion

Education industry at the secondary school level will be drained of its meaning if the proper planning and management of examinations is not given its right of place in school management. This paper focused on how the principals of public secondary school can plan and manage continuous assessment and examination effectively to attainment of secondary education goals. Despite the obvious problems which hampered principals' effective management of examinations, this paper proffered solutions, which could improve Akwa Ibom State public secondary education and Nigerian education system creditably.

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