



Strategies for Mitigating Compromise in the Conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations in Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

For more than two decades now, the challenges of examination malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools has remained unresolved; in spite of several efforts put up by the federal government to stop the menace. It is contended that compromise in the exercise should be responsible for the continued prevalence of the practice. To address the issue, four research questions were raised. The third research question was however formulated into hypothesis. The descriptive survey design was used to collect data from the 291 supervisors out of the 582 non first timer supervisors who participated in the supervision of the 2016 WAEC conducted SSCE in Edo State. The study revealed that the examination centres were the main point of compromise. Seven strategies were suggested for adoption towards mitigating the act of compromise in the exercise.

Key Words: Compromise, Strategies, Mitigating.

INTRODUCTION

Senior secondary education is the next tier, after the basic level in the Nigerian education structure. The other types on the same level are the higher school; and continuing education given in Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) to either basic education graduates who are unable to proceed to the senior secondary schools. As a post basic education, its objectives include among others:

- a. To provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background.
- b. To offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles.
- c. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades
- d. Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development,
- e. Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of worlds cultural heritage,
- f. Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence,
- g. Foster patriotism, national unity and security education with an emphasis on the communities in spite of her diversity and
- h. Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals, who can think independently and rationally, respect the view and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour (FRN, 2013).

In order to confirm the achievement of the objectives of the senior secondary education, completers of the level were subjected to take a terminal examination which leads to the award of Senior School Certificate (SSC). In this regard, Shah (2012) cited in Anolu (2016) opined that, it is generally recognized that examination determines the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved, as well as the extent to which educational institutions have served the needs of the community and society.

Examination serves many functions; some of which are its use in monitoring of education progress of learners and selection of candidates for placement. Its other functions include; diagnosis of and treatment of learning problems and certification of candidates who have successfully completed certain level of training (Jimoh, 2009). In recent times, examinations are being used for selecting, re-directing training, and placing individuals in occupations. It is to be noted that; certificates issued on the basis of examination taken by the candidates is essentially to give assurance to "whom it may concerned" that; the candidates certified by the relevant institutions possess the requisite qualities and competences inscribed in their certificates.

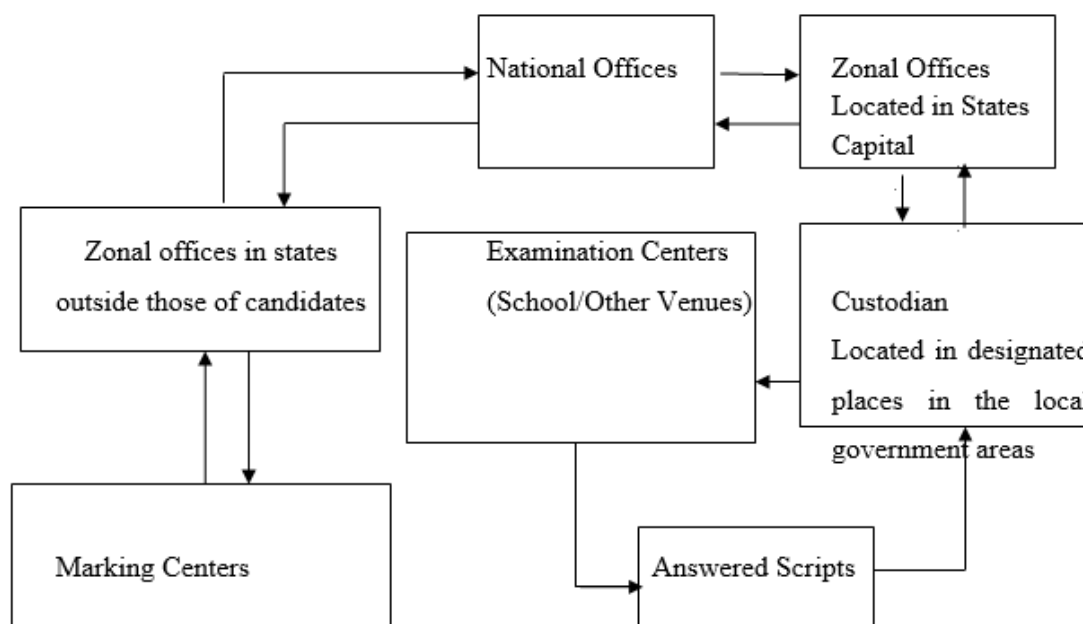
Since the functions of examination are critical in the education system, it demands that; all that are involved in the process be well acquainted with the rules and regulations governing the exercise. Hence, any unethical behaviour on the part of those involved who undermine the conduct of the exercise, before, during and after can be counterproductive.

The senior school certificate examinations are conducted by the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO). Each of the two examinations bodies conduct two examinations twice in a year:

1. The school based Examination which is meant for students in their final year of studies in the senior secondary schools. This is taken between April and June each year.
2. The other which holds between October and December each year is administered for out of school candidates who could not pass the examinations while they were in the school. It also include candidates who dropped out of the formulized senior secondary schools and those who had no opportunities of attending senior secondary schools but had improved themselves over time through non-formal education programmes.

Both types of examination are based on the same curriculum of study. While the school based examinations hold within the school premises of the students, the other type takes place in venues chosen by the examination bodies.

The two types of examinations hold under the same conditions of supervision. The processing of the senior school certificate examinations begin with the preparation of series of questions in all the subject areas covered by the syllabus. The questions which are generated are kept in the question banks. On each examination, the authorities select questions from the bank for printing. The printed questions are safely kept in strong room which is known only by very few top ranking staff in the examination bodies. For each examination on a subject taking place on a designated day, the questions are parceled, sealed and made available to the candidates in the approved venue in the approved center by the examination body. The channel of movement of the sealed questions in sealed packs from the national offices to the examination centres and the return of the answered scripts is as shown below:



Source: Adapted from WAEC and NECO zonal offices Benin City.

The national offices of the two examination bodies WAEC and NECO are located in Lagos and Minna respectively. Between these national offices through the zonal offices located in the states capital to the custodians, the examination materials are handled by staff of the examination bodies under very tight security.

From the last “custodian” to the examination centers, the materials are handled by ad-hoc staff of the examination bodies. This ad-hoc staffs of the examination bodies are the supervisors of the examinations in the approved centers. They may be assisted by invigilators who are usually appointed from among the teaching personnel in the case of the school based center. While the supervisors are paid some remuneration for the job, the invigilators earn nothing from the appointment.

During the conduct of the examinations, officials of the examinations bodies and state ministry of education monitor the exercise. At each of the stages or point in the process, the roles performed by the officers are expected to be in strict compliance with the enabling rules and regulations. In order words, no form of compromise is allowed, no matter whose ox is gut. All answered scripts are sent back to the national office.

With regards to marking of the answered scripts, the non-computerized answered scripts are sent from the national offices to zonal offices located in states other than those of the candidates. In effects, the answered scripts of the candidates are marked in centres outside their states.

Compromise has been described as waiving of theory or principles which underlies a practice for the sake of settlement; a settlement of differences by concession on each side. This is because, each of the two parties involved in the practice can sacrifice and trade-off what ought to guide such practice for pecuniary gains. In the light of the foregoing, Jimoh (2009) found anomie to be the main factor which pre-disposes teachers to examination malpractices. He added that; anomie which is a state of alienation, “normlessness” and degeneration of societal values, pervade the entire fabric of the Nigerian society.

Compromise as an act, is not a bad practice. However, it can be dangerous when its practice is informed by anomie. It is highly contended that, in the conduct of senior school certificate examinations, the teacher, parents, students and the school authorities are not the principal actors that can be held responsible in case of any examination malpractices as posited by Jimoh (2009). After all; none of these persons is charged with the responsibilities of conduct of the examinations. It is against this backdrop, that compromise in the process should be the main factors to explore if solution to the menace is the ultimate.

Although several steps, including legislations have been undertaken to redress the malady, no success seems to have been recorded. In the circumstance, strategies which attempt to mitigate in the matter can be worthwhile

Strategy has been defined by the Wikipedia encyclopedia as a system of finding, formulating and developing a doctrine that will ensure long term success if followed faithfully. In the same encyclopedia, Max-Mckeewn (2011) argues that “strategy is all about shaping the future”, and is the human attempt to get to “desirable ends with available means”. The unethical and shameful practices which are prevailing in the conduct of the senior school certificate examinations cannot be allowed to continue. Therefore, all the odds in the practice deserve to be mitigated.

Mitigation means to lessen the severity of evil. It is also to assuage, to cause to abate, to relax and reduce in the severity of effect of certain acts such as those of compromise of rules and regulations in the conduct of senior school certificate examination. In order to reduce the effect of bad conduct, and undesirable practice in the conduct of SSCE efforts which are directed at minimizing or eliminating the act of examination malpractice itself should be the focus. Therefore, strategies which are aimed at identifying points of compromise and strategies for reducing such acts of compromise become imperative.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is no year, the conduct of senior school certificate examination is not trailed with allegation of malpractice in Edo State. Yet no solution seems to be insight. The situation has brought about mistrust in education which has been acclaimed as instrument par excellence for bringing about national development. In amplification of the situation, Nwadiani (2005) asserted that, the conduct of examinations in Nigeria is now a contemporary shame.

Anomie on the part of teacher, students, parents and private school owners has been identified as the major reason for malpractice in the conduct of senior school certificate examination. (jimoh, 2009). But in the conduct of the examination, student, parents and private school owners play no assigned role. In the same vein, teachers could only be invited for assistance during the exercise.

Whereas WAEC and NECO are the examiners, and are also the ones saddled with the responsibilities, power and authorities of conducting the senior school certificate examinations and award of certificate, anomie on other parties is being blamed for the act of malpractice.

To leave out the activities of the examiners is a lacuna and hence can amount to very serious problems. It amounts to chasing the shadows instead of sustenance. Aminu (2006) had accused WAEC of lacking proper guidance, having poor psychometric properties, examination mismanagement and lacking direction through non – statement of objectives. If the foregoing allegations are anything to go by, the anomie could have also taken its toll on the examiners

and their personnel. For example, collusion between candidates and officials, impersonation, leakages of questions, bribery, accreditation malpractices, substitution of answer sheets, sales of live question papers, sales of blank answer sheets, multiple entry for same examinations, marking malpractice among others were identified by Onyechere (1996) as types/forms of the SSCE examination malpractices in the conduct of examinations. A close look at the allegations shows that it is obvious that the examiners cannot be exonerated from the act.

Fassai (2006), gave a breakdown of the rate of involvement of schools involved in examination malpractices in the six Geo-Political zones of Nigeria. The report indicated that the South-South zone topped the list with 116 schools or 36%. Others were South-West 86 schools or 26.5%, North-Central; 54 schools or 16.6 percent, South-East, 48 schools or 14.8%, North-West; 12 schools or 3.6% and North-East 08 schools or 2.5%.

Within the South-South zone, Edo state is said to be most capable in the act. This is self-evident in the influx of candidates from other states to Edo for Senior Secondary Schools Certificate Examinations. On May 20, 2011, both the electronic and print media in Edo State reported a case of motor accident which killed 66 students who were travelling from Anambra State to write the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination in Edo State. In spite of the various measures put in place by government and the authorities of the examination bodies, the problem remains. The issue now, is what can be done to reduce or eliminate the act of malpractices, so that the Senior Secondary Examination Certificate examinations can take its rightful position in the education system.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This work seeks to unravel the points of compromise in the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations, and to advance strategies for mitigating the identified points of compromise. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- i. Identify the points of compromise of the rules and regulations governing the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations in Edo State, Nigeria.
- ii. Find out those involved in act of compromise during the conduct of senior school certificate examinations in Edo State, Nigeria.
- iii. Find out if there is any difference in the act of compromise of the governing rules and regulations of the conduct of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations in the urban and rural areas of Edo State, Nigeria.
- iv. Advance strategies which can mitigate the identified compromise in the conduct of senior school certificate examinations in Edo State, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to resolve the stated problems, the following research questions were raised.

- i. At what point is the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations compromised in Ed State?
- ii. Who are those involved in the compromise of the governing rules and regulations in the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations?
- iii. Is there any difference in the observed act of compromise in the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations in the urban and rural schools in Edo State?
- iv. What strategies can be applied to mitigate compromise in the conduct of Senior School Certificate Examinations in Edo State?

HYPOTHESIS

Research question three was formulated into hypothesis as follows:

Ho: There is no significance difference in the act of compromise in the conduct of the Senior School Certificate Examinations in the Urban and Rural Schools in Edo State.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study shall be of benefits to the examination bodies, federal government of Nigeria, parents and employers of labour. The examination bodies would as a result of the findings of this work, have basis to anchor their measures against examinations malpractices.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

- i. Urban: Benin City (Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha and Egor Local Government Areas) and the fifteen Local Government Area headquarters in the state.
- ii. Rural: communities outside Benin City and local government headquarters.
- iii. Examiners: Means examination bodies which is; WAEC and NECO
- iv. Supervisor: Ad-hoc staff of the examination bodies employed for the purpose of collecting examination materials to the centers, supervising the conduct of the examinations in the centers and returning of the parceled answered scripts back to the custodians.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey. It was chosen because of its strength in fact finding.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the study consisted of the 582 non first timers of the 780 supervisors who participated in the conduct of the school based senior secondary school certificate examinations administered by WAEC in 2016. The 780 senior secondary schools approved by WAEC and NECO are 314 public schools and 466 privately owned schools.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Proportional sampling technique was used to choose 50% of the population across the three senatorial districts. This amounted to the 291 supervisors used in this study.

INSTRUMENTATION

Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect the data used for the study. It contained eighteen items. The instrument was subjected to face content validity by three experts who are professors in education management and policy studies. The experts who validated the instrument examined the appropriateness of the instrument in measuring what were intended to be measured. It focused on the relevance of the items in the questionnaire based on the point of compromise and the strategies advanced for mitigating such compromise. As a result of the contributions of the experts, some of the items and questions were modified.

To determine the reliability, 20 copies of the instrument were administered in the neighboring Delta State. The data collected were analyzed using the Crombach Alpha. Reliability coefficient was calculated for the instrument to determine its degree of consistency. A reliability coefficient of 8.6.7 was obtained. This was considered as high enough for realizing the purpose of the study.

Four research assistants were used to administered the instrument; two in Edo South and one each for Edo Central and Edo North. In order to facilitate the administration of the instrument, the researcher assistants administered and retrieved the questionnaires to and from the respondents in the custodians, as they(Supervisors) collect or return materials used for the conduct of the examinations.

Research questions one, two and four were analyzed by using the mean and standard deviation. While research question number three was hypothesized and analyzed using t-test. Mean value of 3.5 and above was adopted as corresponding to the opinion of those that agreed to the items in the questionnaires. Below the mean value of 3.5 was accepted as indicating disagreed to the items in the questionnaire.

Research Question 1: At what point is the conduct of SSCE compromised in Edo State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Points of Compromise in the conduct of SSCE in Edo State

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Conduct of SSCE is compromised at the national office	1.22	0.69	Disagreed
2.	Compromise in the conduct of SSCE is in the zonal offices	1.39	0.97	Disagreed
3.	Compromise in the conduct of SSCE is in the custodian	1.58	1.18	Disagreed
4.	Compromise in the conduct of SSCE is in the examination centres	3.59	1.26	Agreed
5.	Compromise in the conduct of SSCE is in the Marking centres	2.35	1.5	Disagreed
6.	Compromise in the conduct of SSCE is in the national office during computation of results	2.35	1.5	Disagreed

Data on table 1 revealed that the six items on the point of compromise on the conduct of senior school certificate examination were rated disagreed except item number four. This is because the means for the five items were below 3.50. The summary of the data on the table shows that the point of compromise is the examinations centre with mean score of 3.59

Research question 2: Who are the officials involved in the compromise of the governing rules and regulations of the conduct of the senior school certificate examinations in Edo State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on Officials involved in the Compromise of the Governing Rules and Regulations of the conduct of the SSCE in Edo State?

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
7.	Some officials of the examination bodies other than the Monitors	3.85	1.00	Agreed
8.	Supervisors	3.96	1.18	Agreed
9.	Invigilators	3.59	1.26	Agreed
10.	Monitors (staff of the examination bodies)	1.10	0.43	Disagreed

11.	Monitor from state offices of ministry of education	4.13	1.16	Agreed
12.	Monitors from the local government offices of the ministry of education	3.84	1.01	Agreed

The data in the table above indicate agreement in all the items except item number ten with mean of 1.10 and standard deviation of 0.43. That is, apart from the monitors who are staff of the examinations bodies, all other officials are involved in the act of compromise.

Research question 4: What Strategies can be applied to Mitigate Compromise in the Conduct of Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Strategies for Mitigating Compromise in the Conduct of Senior School Certificate Examination.

S/N	Items (Strategies)	X	SD	Remarks
13.	Abolition of use of schools as centres for candidates of the same schools	3.23	1.51	Disagreed
14.	Deployment of security men such as police and soldiers to the venues where the SSCE is conducted	3.22	1.51	Disagreed
15.	Use of computer based test for conduct of SSCE	4.27	1.18	Agreed
16.	Contract the conduct of the examinations to consultants	4.04	1.28	Agreed
17.	Examination bodies should train ad-hoc staff	4.41	1.09	Agreed
18.	Educational evaluation as an aspect of teacher education programme should be strengthened to produce personnel that should be the only officials that can be employed to supervise and invigilate during the conduct of the SSCE	4.62	0.81	Agreed
19.	Abolition of invigilators	4.32	1.13	Agreed
20.	Abolition of the use of ad-hoc staff and other government officials for monitoring.	4.67	0.61	Agreed
21.	Improved remuneration packages of supervisors	4.59	0.67	Agreed

The data in table three above revealed that; seven out of the nine items of strategies that can be used to mitigate compromise where agreed to. The two items which were not agreed to were those of numbers thirteen and fourteen with mean rating of 3.23 and 3.22 respectively.

HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of supervisors in urban and rural schools on act of compromise in the conduct of the SSCE in Edo State.

Table 4: Summary of Independent t-test of Supervisors in the Urban and Rural Schools.

Source	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	Sig (2-tailed)
Supervisors						
Urban	163	8.79	4.83	289	2.77	006*
Rural	128	7.45	2.91			

Result of independent t-test that was used to test the hypothesis shows that there was significant difference between urban and rural supervisors in their mean scores on their observed acts of compromise in the conduct of SSCE in Edo State. Those of urban supervisors scored mean of 8.79 and standard deviation of 4.83, while their counterparts in rural schools scored lower mean of 7.45 and standard deviation of 2.91. With t-Cal value of 2.77 at 006 level of significance, the hypothesis is hereby rejected.

DISCUSSION

It has been found from the study that the points of compromise during the conduct of the SSCE are the examination centres. It was also revealed that all the officials except the monitors who are staff of the examination bodies, are involved in the act of compromise during conduct of the SSCE in the state. It further revealed that some officials who are staff of the examination bodies are involved in the act of compromise.

Since the main point of compromise are the examination centers, the findings of the study is in partial support of Jimoh (2009) when he stated that the causes of examination malpractices can be blamed on anomie on the part of the teachers. This is because, teachers as invigilators can only be involved in the conduct of the examinations in centres.

With regards location, the findings of the study did reveal differences in the responses of supervisors in the urban and rural schools. The meaning therefore is that there is difference in the act of compromise in the urban and rural areas of Edo State.

The findings of the study also show that the respondents rejected the suggested strategies of abolition of the use of schools of the candidates as centres for candidates from the same schools. The deployment of security men such as police and soldiers to schools to forestall any act of compromise was also opposed by the supervisors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having a clear understanding of the various points of compromise during the conduct of the SSCE in Edo State is a veritable weapon for combating the menace of examination malpractices in Nigeria. This is because such understanding will have assisted in unraveling the roots of all associated malpractices during the exercise.

It is highly contended that, since the points of compromise in the conduct of SSCE have been located, the following recommendations will suffice in eliminating or reducing the acts:

1. Use of computer based test for the conduct of the SSCE
2. Employment of consultants as contractors for the conduct of the SSCE. It has been noted that in many large organizations, the use of consultants as contractors for the conduct of examinations for the recruitment of new employees is what is now vogue.
3. Examination bodies should train the supervisors who are ad-hoc staff before engaging them for the work.
4. Teachers education programmes in the universities and other related institutions should strengthen courses offered in educational evaluation and assessment with a view to producing reliable supervisors who can be used in the conduct of the SSCE in Nigeria and Edo state in particular.
5. Abolition of the position and role of invigilators
6. Abolition of the use of ad-hoc staff and government officials as monitors during the conduct of the SSCE
7. Improvement on the remuneration package of the supervisors.

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