

Presentation Title: *Using Control Mechanism as a Panacea to Curtail Fraud in Large Scale Assessment: Case of Nigeria Public Examination (a share model)*

By

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#### ABSTRACT

Control mechanisms are guidelines, structures and procedures put in place by an examining body for the running of its operations with a view to checkmate excesses, ensure quality, sustain credibility, foster equity and facilitate efficiency. Control measures remain the only feasibly tool in the hand of public examinations to restore sanctity and promote credibility, considering the complexities of administering public examinations. The present control mechanisms in Nigeria public examinations have prove moderately efficient, however, emergent of technological advancement has put more threat in the conduct of large scale assessment, hence the need to over' haul the existing control mechanisms to meet up with current reality. This paper will not only look at the present control mechanisms in Nigeria public examinations (JAMB, NABTEB, NECO and WAEC) it will elucidate the relevance of control mechanism on public examinations which will consequently allow other examination authorities to evaluate their own processes. It also highlights the various ways forward in overhauling the present structure.

## INTRODUCTION

Public examinations are those examination conducted for which the examining body does not have direct contribution to the training of the examinees, they are typically formal, summative and controlled by agency external to the school where the students has been groomed. Highly standardized achievement test ‘which cut across multicultural, vast and rugged terrains.

The features of public examination has made it susceptible to all sorts of abuses and sharp practices that tend to erode its credibility, records have shown that no year passed in Nigeria without cases of exam malpractice, in fact every public examination body in Nigeria, has, it own share of this menace. Certificate forgery, leakages, impersonations, mass cheating, assault, mobile phone influenced malpractice, substitution of scripts, copying unconducive environment, illegal registration, falsification of result are some of the ways this heinous act is being orchestrated nationwide.

The awarding bodies move to checkmate, curtail and moribund these excesses has lead to emergent of control mechanisms. Control mechanisms are therefore evolving not only to checkmate, but also to ensure and sustain standards across the subjects and states.

Public examinations in Nigeria include National Business Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) National Examinations Council (NECO), National Teachers Institute, West African Examinations Council (WAEC).

This paper treats this topic in the following sub-headings.

- i. Control Mechanisms defined.
- ii. Advantages of control mechanism in public examination
- iii. Control mechanism: existing structure in public examinations in Nigeria
- iv. Examination malpractice a threat to control mechanism in public examinations
- v. Recommendations on control mechanism.

## CONTROL MECHANISM IN PUBLIC EXAMINATION

### 3.1 CONTROL MECHANISMS DEFINED

These are guidelines, and procedures put in place in an organization to checkmate excesses and direct the mode of operations.

These guidelines may be standardized conventional and\ or customized to suit the prevailing circumstances within which such organization operates. Control mechanisms must be clearly spelt out and made known to staff, ad-hoc staff and in some cases the public, so that a violation of each tenet will not be as a result of ignorance but a deliberate act, that should attract a punishment.

### 3.2 FEATURES OF CONTROL MECHANISM IN PUBLIC EXAMINATION

- i. It must be clearly stated and devoid of any ambiguity
- ii. It must not contradict any section of enabling act of the organization
- iii. It must not give room for fraudulent act
- iv. It must be properly documented
- v. It must cut across divergent cultures and tribes
- vi. It must not be too technical to decipher.

## BENEFITS OF CONTROL MECHANISM IN PUBLIC EXAMINATION

1. It facilitates operational network of awarding body
2. It makes room for equity, fairness and equal opportunity for candidates
3. It helps in checkmating examination fraud

4. It enhances productivity of staff and fosters greater commitment of staff to their duties
5. It facilitates ease and quick detection of fraud and cheat
6. It fast track preparation of budget for examination
7. It ensures and sustains standard in public examination
8. It avoid duplication of duty
9. It helps in tracing sources of mistake, faults and errors
10. It gives room for thoroughness
11. It ensures sanity and credibility in the operation of public examination
12. It assists in blocking loop holes in every stage of administration of examination
13. It enhances delegation of duty and thorough supervision
14. It facilitates the deployment of staff
15. It helps public examination to avoid and arrest litigation

## **EXISTING CONTROL MECHANISMS IN NIGERIA PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS**

### **TEST ITEM GENERATION AND HANDLING**

The procedures adopted by public examinations boards in Nigeria are relatively the same, from my experience as WAEC Marker, JAMB Monitoring Officer ,and presently working with NECO, it is in this regard that the following mechanisms expounded above can fairly represent what is obtainable in most Public Examination Board in Nigeria

### **4.0 TESTS GENERATION AND PRODUCTION**

Items are generated in phases where each phase is stored in item data bank, the item generator may not know which of the items (phase) will be selected, even, the Chief Executive of such exam body may be in the dark on which of the item is going to be selected.

- i. Items are edited regularly
- ii. Items selected for an exam are always prepared photo cameral ready to the printer.
- iii. In most cases location for printing of sensitive material are not made known to the public.
- iv. Item strong room otherwise called typing pool is NO GO area for large percentage of the exam body staff.

### **PRINTING OF SENSITIVE MATERIAL**

This is exclusive duty of most Chief Executive, whose responsibility it is to ensure that these question papers are produced in a well secured environment and he places men of credible character in such position to oversee.

### **DISTRIBUTION OF EXAM MATERIALS**

This vary from examination bodies as each adopt the most convenient, secure, economical means, one day exam distribution is done on the eve of the exam under a tight security, while long duration exam is mostly done on daily basis.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF EXANINATION**

### **5.0 CONDUCT OF EXAMS**

Due to the paucity of staff, exam body engages the services of ad-hoc staff to ensure smooth running of their operations. This staffs are called Supervisors and Invigilators who must be in the payroll of state ministry of education to ease the process of prosecution in the event of compromise.

### **MONITORING OF EXAMS**

1. Exam body staff are deployed to the centers to ensure strict compliance to the exam standard and sustain equity
2. Ad-hoc staff from institutions of higher learning is at times engaged to complement the effort of exam body staff.

3. Computer unit is saddled with the responsibility of processing the exams results
4. The computer unit control mechanisms in mostly esoteric and peculiar to each examination body, this piece may not be competent to expound on this.
5. Movement to the computer unit is highly restricted to only authorize individual(s).

### **RETRIEVAL OF WORKED SCRIPTS**

#### **6.0 HANDLING OF WORKED SCRIPTS**

Worked scripts: These are candidates answer booklets or/and OMR that have not been processed. These are susceptible to malpractice, hence, the need for urgent evacuation to a safer place for processing:

- i. No worked scripts should stay in the school exam centre
- ii. Worked scripts are always evacuated to the custodian points on daily basis.
- iii. Worked scripts are moved out of the custodian points to the capital city of each state for swapping purpose in case of essay based exam.
- iv. Multiple choice exam worked scripts are always evacuated directly to the computer unit where it will be processed
- v. Worked scripts for swapping do not last more than 10 days after the last paper before they are swapped.

#### **6.1 SWAPPING**

This is an exercise carried out in which scripts from source are moved to marking venues where they will be marked, this is to ensure that scripts generated in an environment are not marked in the same environment.

### **MARKING EXERCISE CONTROL MECHANISMS**

#### **7.0 CORDINATION OF EXAMINERS**

This is an exercise conducted before marking proper commences, for all examiners that are to be involved in marking, it is done in phases: -

- i. Like-coordination for all team leaders in charge/chief examiners for each subject
- ii. Team leader's coordination
- iii. Examiners (EG III) coordination.

All these coordination are to ensure fairness, uniformity, equity and sustainability of standard.

Marking Scheme is detailed answers to all the questions asked on subject basis which must carry marks allocated for each question, this product is the contributions of both the subject office of examining body and Chief Examiners of each subject.

#### **PURPOSES**

To ensure high degree of consistency in the marking of essay type of question

To maintain uniformity and standard across the board

To erase all forms of subjectivity in awarding marks

To ensure equity.

#### **CONTROL MECHANISMS ON MARKING SCHEME**

Marking scheme is prepared at the end of examinations.

Pre /coordination exercise ensure standardization of the marking scheme

Marking of dummy by each marker put the marking scheme in to another test among all examiners for that subject

## **7.1 MARKING EXERCISE**

- i. Scripts are issued to examiners after coordination who must signed an undertakings before collections
- ii. Scripts must be counted and reconcile with subject officer to ensure corrections
- iii. Marked scripts must. The recounted scripts will be sent to the checkers whose duty is to cross-check the summation of scores and ensure the same reflect in the Mark and Attendance Sheet.
4. No checker is allowed to make any correction, if in the sole duty of the checker supervisor, so that checkers will not alter score in favour of their relative(s).
5. The checked scripts will be returned to the subject officer to collect Examiners Mark sheet where scores from MAS will be transferred to.
6. Scores recorded in exams will be cross-checked by the subject officer; the examiner calls the score(s) of each candidate for the subject officer who holds the EMS as he calls.
7. The EMS must be returned to the unit (computer unit) directly to ensure that access to those scores is limited to the computer staff

## **7.2 CHECKERS ACTIVITIES**

1. Checkers ensure the score in the scripts tally with that in the mark and attendance to avoid misplacement of judgment.
2. Checkers are under the control of checkers Supervisor who is the only authorized person to correct error but not the final arbiter in the venue
3. Parcel checked must be recorded with an indication of the checker's name
4. Allocation form is meant to ensure monitoring of movement of parcel with the examiner.
5. Allocation/issuance of scripts is done by the Subject Officer who ensure that total number of scripts collected tally with the reality
6. When returning, the Subject Officer should count to ascertain that what was collected, is actually returned
7. Payment of examiner(s) is supervised and cross-checked by subject officer, examiner, Accountant, Venue Coordinator and the organization Headquarters.
8. Payments are done through check/on-line to ensure those who marked are paid and those who do not mark are left out.
9. Examiner mark sheet (EMS) which is the summary of all scores capture from the candidates scripts are jealously guided and sent directly from the marking venue to computer unit for final processing, so as to avert any ridiculous interactions with it.
10. Recruitment of examiners and checkers follow a given standard, to ensure equity and standardization.
11. Marking schemes are always prepared after the examination so as to prevent divulging it to the public prematurely.
12. Processing of EMS in each of the examining body is kept secretly independently of others.
13. Grade boundary is done before result is released to ensure that the public are carried along.

## **8.0 HANDLING OF MALPRACTICE CASES**

1. The collection, collation and production of malpractice cases is done by the exam body but in most cases a committee that involve (stake holders) outside is engaged to objectively criticized this report before implementation. To checkmate excesses.
2. Even after the release of result cases of malpractice are attended to so as to justify the action of the examination body.

## **EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE A BANE OF PUBLIC EXAMINATION IN NIGERIA.**

Shonekan (1996) opined that examination malpractice is an act of omission or commission that contravenes West African Examinations Council regulations to the extent of undermining the validity and reliability or ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued. Cheating and other forms of examination irregularities could be:

- i. Before the examination - leakage
- ii. During the examination - impersonation, mass cheating, colluding, use of mobile phone.
- iii. After the exam and before marking substitution of scripts or/and parcel.
- iv. While the scripts are being marked - falsification of scores.
- v. during certification-faking of certificate

### **Few Cases:**

February 16, 2006 edition of daily Trust carried a caption

1. Accused admits selling exam paper, confession made by printing company staff.
2. May 3, 2008 edition of Punch Newspaper reported that candidates buy exam papers from syndicate
3. May 4-10, 2008 edition of weekly news line (Minna based) reported police arrest 2 for forging master sheet of an examination body.
4. In 2005, about 324 schools were de-recognized and black listed by Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria through the input of NABTEB, JAMB, NECO, and WAEC.
5. Case where syndicate hijack a centre so as to facilitate cheating
6. Cases where supervisor bargain with the school authority on financial gain to him, so as to allow irregularities.
7. Case where candidates follow their scripts to marking venue.

In Nigeria today no public examination body has ever released result without a correspondent released of examination malpractices.

Irregularities have exerted its influence on the credibility of examination being conducted especially in the following ways.

- i. It undermines the reliability and validity of certificates being issued
- ii. It rubbishes the image of the awarding body
- iii. It endangers the education standard of any nation
- iv. It leads to loss of life, job and position of the affected individual
- v. It enhances moral decadence, encourages juvenile delinquencies and fosters laziness.
- vi. It facilitates emergence of mushroom schools who will not be able to meet the educational needs of the candidates.
- vii. It breeds cultism, hooliganism, sexual perversion in our institution of higher learning. Pathetic picture painted for the present and past generation, does not portend a good omen for the future, hence, the need to launch a battle through control mechanisms to checkmate these excesses and restore credibility to the operation of public examination and certificates it issued.
8. Stakeholders meeting should be summoned on yearly basis to intimate the concerned individuals and authorities on their mode of operations.
9. Use of GSM jammer, where an electronic device neutralizes other mobile phone usage.

## **1. CONTROL MECHANISMS BEFORE THE EXAMINATIONS**

Leakage may be controlled by:

- i. Appointing supervisors of proven integrity and who are independent of the examination centre;
- ii. Paper moderators taking individual questions from different setters rather than a complete paper from a single setter;
- iii. Providing secure packaging (sealed envelopes within tamper-proof papers) and storage of papers;
- iv. Insisting on opening and sealing of all packages in front of examination candidates;
- v. Providing secure storage facilities for materials in transit (e.g. banks, police stations, and army barracks);
- vi. Improving examination official's remunerations slightly higher than personnel in comparable levels in the institution/Ministry responsible for education;
- vii. Entrusting the typing of the entire examination to one typist;
- viii. Taking out an insurance policy to cover the consequences of a leaked test;
- ix. Recruiting supervisory staff (invigilators) from a school other than that in which the examination is being held;
- x. Restricting access to the environs of the examination centre, and
- xi. Withholding payment to printer if leakage can be attributed to that source.

## **2. DETECTION MECHANISMS**

To detect impersonation, supervisors/invigilators should check candidates' examination numbers and identity cards both with photographs against the enrolled list before allowing them into the examination room.

It would be difficult to detect this type of cheating if it takes place with the express approval of head teachers and supervisors/invigilators. After the examination, impersonation could be detected by comparing handwriting in different courses during marking exercise.

## **3. CONTROL MECHANISMS**

Impersonation:

- i. Ensure that only formally registered candidates sit for the examination. Submit clear photographs at the time of registration that can be checked against the candidate during the examination.
- ii. Frequent unannounced visits to examination centers by the Council officials
- iii. External assistance: prohibit the use of electronic devices including cellular phones and pagers.
- iv. Examining body should generate photo album from her e-registration.

## **CONTROL MECHANISM AFTER THE EXAMINATION**

### **3a. DETECTION MECHANISMS**

Marker malpractice can be detected by:

- i. The supervisor following up cases of lost or missing examination scripts.
- ii. The checker ensuring marks on a particular script tally.
- iii. The checker looking for extraneous marks on the examination papers.
- iv.

### **3b. CONTROL MECHANISMS**

Marker malpractice should be controlled by:

- i. Using independent remarking of examination to detect willful mark inflation
- ii. Reducing human access (and the possibility of interference with marking and for data entry) by using technology in the form of optical scanners and computers. Other forms of technology, especially pagers, and cellular phones pose new threats to examination integrity.
- iii. Use of dummy numbers.

### **4. DETECTION MECHANISMS**

In order to detect cheating in the awards of certificates, examining bodies should:

- i. Look for minor typographical or design marks unique for the examining body certificates;
- ii. Check the ability of a person seeking a copy of a certificate to provide personal information that had been recorded on the registration form;
- iii. Compare records to provide evidence that certificates have been altered or have been used by a person other than the candidate.
- iv. embossment of candidate photograph on the certificate
- v. Issuing certificate twice should be discouraged
- vi. All Higher Institution of Learning should be mandated to verify the certificate of their entire intake.
- vii. Colour differentiation, signatures and security code should be varied on yearly basis

### **5. CONTROL MECHANISMS**

- i. Publish evidence of wrongdoing and application of legal sanctions for malpractice;
- ii. Share Model should be encouraged to ensure cross fertilization of ideas and information between National and International Examination Boards on new threats to examination security and on procedures for counteracting malpractice;
- iii. Take out an insurance policy that will cover the cost for conducting another examination in case of a leaked examination;
- iv. Conduct public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of the integrity of the examination system;
- v. encourage political and civic leaders to speak out in favour of a public examination system that is administered by qualified people and according to accepted rules that is devoid of external interference and that has the confidence of the public;

### **6. PENALTIES FOR CHEATING**

A range of penalties for controlling cheating in examinations exists. Some of these are

- i. Written reprimand to the culprits.
- ii. Rewrite work subject to grade penalty.
- iii. Grade on work, or section question, reduced (may be down to "0").
- iv. Final grade in examination lowered,
- v. Retroactive withdrawal from the examination.
- vi. Complete failure in the examination.
- vii. Suspension of the culprit. Suspension does not imply automatic readmission or registration at either the end of a specified period of time or thereafter.



viii. Disciplinary action, which may involve, but may not be limited to, dismissal of an employee.

ix. Cancellation of entire result of the affected centres.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTROL MECHANISM OVER HAULING TILE EXISTING CONTROL MECHANISMS IN NIGERIAN'S PUBLIC EXAM**

The existing control mechanisms in public examination in Nigeria can be overhauled to meet the current exigencies. It is in the light of this, that these recommendations become a *sin qua non*.

1. Establishment of an umbrella organ under which all public examinations in Nigeria operate - Nigeria Association of Educational Assessment: a Strategy to maintain comparable examination standards across awarding bodies.
2. Establishment of examination either in each school and integrating exam ethic into the nation curriculum of education.
3. Current structure of each body should be religiously followed
4. Stiff punitive measure should be meted out for erring individual
5. Technological advancement (ICT) should be exploited to the advantage of examining body,
6. Punishment for violation of rules and regulations guiding the conduct of exam should be made public and available to the clients through the school and state Ministry of education
7. Yearly reviewed of activities should be carried out, so as to detect possible loopholes and necessary solution proffered.

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