

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

**THE CHALLENGE OF
STUDENTS' UNDER
PERFORMANCE IN
SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATIONS:**

THE WAY OUT

ADAMS ONUKA, Ph. D

**THE CHALLENGE OF STUDENTS'
UNDER-PERFORMANCE IN SENIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS:
THE WAY FORWARD**

*A Paper Presented in Memory of the
Rev. Israel Oludotun Ransome-kuti
At Nigeria Union of Teachers'
2nd Annual National Founders' Day
Celebration/80th National Conference
At Nicon Luxury Hotel, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria
On 10 July, 2012*

ADAMS OTUOZE U. ONUKA

Institute of Education,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

**The Challenge of Students' under-performance in Senior
Secondary School Examinations: The Way Forward.**

Copyright © Onuka

First Edition, 2012

Revised Edition, June 2013

ISBN 978-978-52323-5-6

All rights reserved.

Published by

Academic & Research Excellence Group (ARE)

Ibadan.

Tel: 08033564064, 08182794416

Printed by

Esthom Graphic Prints

Tel: 07030298365

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

Table of Contents

Chapters:

1. The challenge of students' under performance
in senior secondary education examinations:
the way forward.....5
2. Causes and Effects.....18
3. The Way Forward43

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

Chapter One

THE CHALLENGE OF STUDENTS' UNDER PERFORMANCE IN SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATIONS: THE WAY FORWARD

In Nigeria today, it is obvious that performances in Secondary School Examinations are much below the expected level. It is not even represented by normal curve, even though scholars had opined that students can perform well if given the right type of environment or if assisted to realize their potentials.

This postulation is represented by the mastery learning school of thought as espoused by Block (1971), Bloom, Hasting and Madaus (1971), Block and Anderson (1975), Ezewu (1982) and Umoru-Onuka (1997 & 1999) among others. Thus, it is possible for every person to perform well if given the appropriate learning environment, in the realization that individuals have different learning abilities, and if also given the necessary support. However, in the last three decades, students' performances in the various examinations at the

secondary education level and other tiers of education in Nigeria have been constantly, on the aggregate, below average.

Several studies carried out by scholars and students in the various universities have shown that students are under-performing in the certificate and post-certificate examinations (Onuka and Junaid, 2007; Onuka, 2007a; Adeyemi, 2011; Durowoju, 2012).

May I point out that if it were not for my stark illiterate mother, who guided me and made sure I did not become a truant, I will not be standing here today to deliver this lecture in memory of an illustrious pioneer in the Nigerian education landscape. In the past, teachers monitor their pupils even after school hours. I remember an incident in the 1960's when we were playing 'irrelevantly' after school hours in a village as it were then called OKPE in Edo State, when the headmaster of Local Authority School in that village which I attended passed by, without deliberately paying attention to what we were doing, though we greeted him. We never knew he had taken serious 'disciplinary' notice of our 'dereliction' and perhaps indolence. The following day we were all called out to give account of our negligence for not studying while we should and with the evidence he supposedly had, we needed to pay for it by way of

disciplinary measures to redirect our efforts and attention to what we should be doing to enable us perform excellently well in our academic pursuit. It worked, because many of those who were so caught on that occasion began to be more serious in their academic endeavours, which have now proven to be profitable. In the two examples given above, you will agree with me that in the past, both teachers and parents were working in tandem to ensure that their pupils/students worked very hard to achieve the objective for which they were sent to school.

Under-performance of students in public examinations is succinctly illustrated in the following reports from some participating countries in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) conducted examinations as can be seen from the excerpts given below:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Nigeria's Chief Examiners' Report

Students' performance did not show any significant improvement compared with previous years.

Candidates' weaknesses include the following:

- a. Inability to understand the contents of the set passages and the questions on them;

- b. Wrong use of punctuation marks;
- c. Copying portions of the set passage as answers
- a. Use of ungrammatical structures (WAEC, 2010a pp.3 - 5).

Sierra Leone's Chief Examiners' Report

The main reasons for the poor performances of candidates could be attributed to the following:

- a. Inability to understand the rubrics for the questions set;
- b. The general incompetence of candidates to express themselves well in English. The main reason for this as observed in their essays could be the fact that candidates generally think in their vernacular (especially krio) while writing in English. This makes their expression in many instances poor or below average;
- a. Candidates' poor knowledge of the Grammar and structure of the English Language. There were many errors of spellings and the wrong use of tenses. This often makes the essays almost unreadable. This leads to loss of mark for Mechanical Accuracy. This wrong use of connective like however, moreover, nevertheless etc. makes coherence sometimes impossible (WAEC, 2010b p 116).

Gambia's Chief Examiners' Report

There was the usual general misunderstanding of questions and the passages set for Comprehension and Summary. Twenty percent (20%) of the candidates scored zero in these areas. The only area where 30% of the candidates scored marks was the continuous writing i.e. the Letters, Articles, the Speech and the Story (WAEC, 2010c p 1).

MATHEMATICS

Nigeria's Chief Examiners' Report

Candidates' performance was reported to be comparable with those of the previous years. The report further stated that a few centres recorded good performance by the candidates as well as reduced rate of examination malpractice. However, most candidates failed in the application of basic concepts and principles. The overall performances of the candidates were generally reported not to be different from those of the previous years.

Candidates' weaknesses observed were:

- a. Solving problems on measurement in three dimensions. Majority of the candidates were also reported not to be able to recall the properties of a Rhombus.
- b. Everyday Arithmetic as in questions 6b and 11b
- c. Geometry: questions on this topic were reported to be avoided by majority of the candidates and

- the few who attempted them performed poorly.
- d. Arithmetic progression
 - e. Reading and drawing inferences from graphs
 - f. Statistics: many candidates did not draw the cumulative frequency curve using the upper class boundaries.
 - g. Representing given information on diagrams (WAEC, 2010a p 283).

Sierra Leone's Chief Examiners' Report

As in previous years, not all candidates attempted all the questions from Part II. Use of wrong units is also another common error that leads to loss of marks. There was clear evidence on the scripts of many candidates to show that, basic elementary algebra is not known and practiced. Candidates lack basic skills in handling problems leading to equations, transferring terms from one side of an equation to another, handling simple fractions and being able to solve sets of equations (WAEC, 2010b p 105).

Gambia's Chief Examiners' Report

The candidates lacked knowledge of:

- a. Simple fractions in ratio form
- b. Algebraic fractions
- c. Constructing algebraic equations

- d. Drawing geometric shapes from word problems
- e. Properties of rhombus
- f. Graphical solution of equations
- g. Identifying the net of a pyramid to aid determination parts of the shape
- h. Properties of arithmetic progression
- i. Theatrical solutions of transformation problems (WAEC, 2010c p 63).

ECONOMICS

Nigeria's Chief Examiners' Report

Students' performance did not show any significant improvement compared with previous years.

The common weaknesses manifested in the candidates' scripts were:

- a. Inability to compute values from graphs: a good number of the candidates could not compute values from graph. This made it difficult for them to carry out simple calculations. Consequently, candidates lost marks for this reason.
- b. Poor grammatical expression: a good number of candidates found it difficult to present their ideas on paper. Most of the candidates lacked the

adequate language of expression. Poor marks were scored for this reason.

- c. Failure to expatiate points: many candidates only listed points without providing detailed explanations. This fact made it difficult for them to score full marks for the questions attempted (WAEC, 2010a p 77).

Sierra Leone's Chief Examiners' Report

The following weaknesses were highlighted in most of the reports

- a. Inadequate explanation of points
- b. Inadequate preparation and poor grammatical expression contributed to their dismal performances (WAEC, 2010b p 1).

Gambia's Chief Examiners' Report

Candidates' weaknesses include the following:

- a. Inability of the candidates to interpret the graph correctly;
- b. Non-coverage of the topics in the syllabus by the candidates;
- c. Inadequate or non-availability of relevant reading materials;

- d. Poor expression in English Language;
- e. Non-understanding of the command words in the questions;
- f. Candidates' inability to identify the initial equilibrium point along the supply curve (WAEC, 2010c p 26).

BIOLOGY

Nigeria's Chief Examiners' Report

The performances of the candidates was slightly poorer than that of the previous year with a mean score of 18 and a standard deviation of 08.54 compared with a mean score of 21 and a standard deviation of 11.58 for the Nov/Dec. 2009 WASSCE.

The observed weaknesses of candidates were:

- a. Poor spelling of technical terms;
- b. Poor knowledge of carrying out experiments, taking readings, making observations and drawing conclusions on experimental data;
- c. Poor knowledge of genetics and drawing of poor genetic diagrams;
- d. Poor mathematical skills;
- e. Poor grasp of classification of plants (WAEC, 2010a pp 176-186).

Sierra Leone's Chief Examiners' Report

Candidates seemed to have had difficulties in answering questions 4 and 6. The responses showed that they were poorly prepared in the areas of genetics, evolution and blood group inheritance. A common flaw in the candidates' answers is the inability to weigh the requirements of a question requesting him/her to 'define', 'explain', 'describe' or 'outline'. In questions 3(a), 4(a), (c), 5(c), 6(a), (c), and (d) almost all the response were definitions (WAEC, 2010b p 156).

Gambia's Chief Examiners' Report

Candidates' weaknesses include the following:

- a. poor level of preparation and lack of basic knowledge
- b. habit of just copying the questions on the answer
- c. wrong use of terminology
- d. failure to attempt the required number of questions
- e. lack of logical presentation of ideas
- f. wrong spellings of biological/scientific terms
(WAEC, 2010a p 116).

COMMERCE

Nigeria's Chief Examiners' Report

“Candidates' performance was fair. Few candidates

displayed good understanding of questions and used good illustration to buttress their points. Few candidates kept to rubrics and presented their answers in an orderly manner. Causes of fair performances are:

- a. Poor preparation for the examination, some candidates answers showed inadequate knowledge of the subject. This was evident by their poor performances in most of the questions.
- b. Most of the candidates misunderstood the questions which led to inadequate answering them out of context.
- c. Poor expression, many candidates could not clearly express their points in simple sentences” (WAEC, 2010a pp.127 - 131).

Sierra Leone's Chief Examiners' Report

“Candidates performed disappointingly, they did not do well. There were no very high scores although there were very few zero. Candidates do not seem to be improving and performing better. Causes of poor performance are:

- a. Year after year it seems that candidates do not cover the syllabus.
- b. At times it appears as if some candidates have never studied this subject but entered for it as a

general knowledge subject.

- c. There were so many candidates who did not attempt the required five questions.
- d. There were some other candidates who answered only one question” (WAEC, 2010b pp. 11-15).

Gambia's Chief Examiners' Report

“Candidates' performance was generally poor. Causes of fair performances are:

- a. One may suggest that majority of the candidates did not prepare well for the examination. This is evidenced in the structure of the answers they provided.
- b. In fact about 35% of the candidates just copied the questions.
- c. Others wrote their answers with no reference to the demands of the questions.
- d. Some of them misinterpreted most of the questions” (WAEC, 2010c pp. 207 - 211).

These reports did not in any significant way differ from the previous ones with regard to Nigeria (see also WAEC, Nigeria Reports, 2000 and 2003 respectively). A cursory journey down the memory lane reveals the fact that a lot of preparations were normally undertaken by schools, implying that all hands were on deck in

preparing the students for external certificate examinations. In fact it was done either on provincial or state basis at some point in time in our history. Such preparations included the conduct of mock WASCE.

Teachers, principals, parents and the students themselves were heavily involved in the preparation, hence, the near hundred percent successes recorded in those days. Stakeholders were then very dedicated, competitive in the good sense of the word, sacrificial as opposed to the current trend of selfishness, monetization and lack of commitment and dedication by stakeholders in the entire education industry. Teachers were well regarded and honoured, though they earn very little compared to others, yet they had very good level of self-concept of themselves and the resultant effect was that they performed highly well, which in turn resulted in high flying performance by their students. Facilities were sufficiently adequate and commensurate to the student population as opposed to what currently obtains (Onuka, 2007).

Chapter Two

CAUSES AND EFFECTS

There are several identifiable causes of students' under-performance in secondary school certificate examinations in the country. The under-listed are some of the causes of students' under-performance in Nigeria among others:

Parents

The contribution of some parents to declining students' performance in public examinations in Nigeria cannot be ignored, because parents often indulge their children, whom they seem not to have control over, dancing to their whims and caprices, which contradicted what our own parents, who knew nothing in terms of western education, did to get us educated to the level we are today.

The present crop of parents who are supposedly educated allow their children to do whatever pleases them because they do not want them to go through the same kind of suffering they under went to become who

they are now, forgetting the fact that only suffering/sacrifice can actually beget true glory, they allow them watch whatever they feel like watching on the electronic media (television) without giving thought to the kind of impact such may make in the lives of their wards and even allow them to spend whatever amount of time they feel like spending watching all sorts of home-video programmes or irrelevant television programmes including those that corrupt the mind as well as distract and make study ineffective; without giving consideration to judicious use of their time.

Onuka and Durowoju (2010) submit that some parents were found to be aiding and abetting their wards to engage in examination malpractices instead of actually ensuring that they study hard and thereby perform well in the school. They also forget that the purpose of schooling is actually learning and learning well in order to be in the position to apply to one's life what he or she had learnt in order to foster nation building. By implication, therefore, examination is a tool to measure how much learning had taken place.

Parents are believed to have encouraged and indeed corrupted examination ad hoc officials to ensure that their wards were assisted to pass during examinations even when they knew full well that these children have

been indolent rather than being studious and/or reading in preparation for their future (Onuka and Durowoju, 2010). Thus, emphasizing examination at the expense of learning is in itself a stumbling block to effective learning and in turn to passing examinations well and creditably too, in our clime.

In spite of the fact that parents want their wards to be successful in their studies, many a Nigerian parent do not pay the requisite attention to their wards' daily progress in schools, because they are occupied by numerous activities such as politicking, busy amassing wealth all over the place and such other things that draw their attention away from their primary responsibility to their children, with no time left to give their personal attention to their wards, which often makes a world of positive difference, if ever given. Some parents over-pamper their children by providing them with the non-essential, in the show of money power or strength irrespective of whether or not these non-essentials distract from effective learning, thinking that recruiting private teachers for their children is the panacea for under-performance, until when they come to discover that these students can no longer be spoon fed, by the time they would have left secondary school, and now have to undertake independent study at the tertiary level by themselves. By such time, the damage of dependence on others would have dawn on them.

Other parents will simply not pay attention to making the home environment conducive to learning and also never provided any form of learning materials for these children. While others would not do so, because they consider themselves as being terribly poor and as such cannot afford to provide these materials. In our days, we were not spoon fed, we went to school to learn and acquire skills that will make us to participate in nation building and also earn a livelihood and to be good citizens of this country. I had the good fortune of being educated in Edo and Kogi States at the primary school level.

The English Language text books we used taught us history and geography of Nigeria. So we knew Nigeria even we have not travelled by reading English Language only. We read poems at the primary level that taught us a lot of sense and how to relate to others. I did study geography, some history, hygiene and nature study, civics etc at the primary school. The depth of study we undertook at that level prepared people like me to be able to undertake private study for secondary education examinations even in a shorter time than normal and yet made success of it by the hands of God. This did not in any way make us inferior to others because we were well grounded at that level of education for all future

educational endeavours. I am not sure that the same will happen these days.

Unnecessary importation of foreign values

We have simply lost our positive values to negative foreign values. In our days in primary school, everybody was another's keeper, we studied together after school, we related to one another at the weekend, discussing what we learnt during the past week and did a thorough review of such to enable us prepare very well for the following week. This was because we had communal living and working together then. We lived in a community rather than in high walled isolated houses that we have these days, which makes relating a bit difficult. This trend is alien to our culture of African brotherhood and is very much affecting our progress in the positive way and thereby affecting the educational progress of our wards. I discover that even though the westerners, the Europeans and Americans wish to live in community like we do, we are desirous and indeed are living isolated lives which they are desirous of discarding. These developments hamper rather than assist our children's educational progress. For instance, these days Nigerians prefer watching European football teams than watching Nigerian football teams, reading foreign books than Nigerian or African books as opposed

to the days when if you read Shakespeare without commensurate reading of Wole Soyinka, Chenua Achebe, TM Aluko, Cyprian Ekwensi, Abubakar Imam, Gabriel Okara, Ola Rotimi etc you will not feel that you have read anything, these days the contrary obtains.

It was so in those days because their books were crafted with the cognizance of our cultural backgrounds, which make one better understood them than those coming from alien culture, thereby promoting effective learning among students. They could easily relate what they have learnt to their various cultural backgrounds, and could easily teach each other and one another from their various cultural perspectives. Thus, educating one another about what obtained in other parts of the country. From such extra-classroom interaction, they did interrogate the texts which they had read; they competed healthily in digesting the contents of the various texts to further educate one another, resulting in high level performances of students in the certificate examinations. Emphasis was on learning rather than on passing examinations.

Corruption and loss of good cultural values

There is corruption everywhere, not only in terms of giving and taking of bribery, but also in terms of perversion of justice, inequity, abuse of due process, etc.

Parents would not teach their children morals, nor live uprightly but they corrupt their children by teaching them perverted values. Imagine a situation where parents and teachers encourage, aid and abet examination malpractice, how then will a student want to work hard and pass his/her examinations meritoriously? This is because both stakeholders have neglected their responsibility of proper parenting and teaching well respectively, that they encourage malpractices in examinations as a face saving mechanism. The resultant effect of this negligence on the parts of parents and teachers is indolence and lackadaisical attitude towards education on the part of the students. Such trend will usually culminate in under-performance in public examinations that are based on what is expected to be taught according to syllabus and not what the schools could achieve in terms of what they were able to do in the classroom teaching. Teachers hardly want to put up extra efforts to lead the students to successes as was in the immediate post-colonial era. Nigerians currently believes so much in the unsavoury saying that the 'end justifies the means' which makes her a country of anything goes, whereas it should actually be that the means should justify the end because if the end is wrongly reached, it is corruption and so it is not right. It is anti-God, whom we all claim one way or the other to have believed.

We now believe more in acquiring wealth through any means and this attitude has contributed greatly to the decline in our values as well as in the performance in schools and in the ensuing external examinations that ultimately determine whether or not they will move forward or remain stagnant. As long as we make money our primary object of endeavour, so long shall there continue to be stagnated performance in the Nigerian educational horizon. If we remember learning does not depend solely on what is taught but also on what is observed, it implies then that we parents and teachers have inadvertently taught our children wrong values and given them wrong orientation by our actions and inactions. Even, the religious leaders are also culpable in this wise, because the lifestyle of many a religious leader in this country run counter to what the religions teach us about living to the glory of God. National and community leaders have not been very exemplary in terms of wealth acquisition.

Under-funding

This lecturer has carried out researches on funding education in Nigeria, and found out that the education system is under-funded, particularly with respect to the public sector schools. He also found out that with over twenty-two agencies in the education sector as at 2004, a lot of waste was being caused by the administrative bureaucracy and the concomitant funding of these

agencies. Thus, whatever fund was available to the sector would also be shared by such agencies and the schools in the sector with the implication that what would be left to the real sector of education, the educational institutions of learning would become inadequate to service teaching and learning for optimal realization of our educational goals and aspirations as a nation and of course the students will under-perform in examinations (Onuka, 2005; 2007b&2011).

It is pertinent to note that education as social capital cannot be left to the vagaries of market forces and should not be private driven as it is becoming now. Government and every well meaning Nigerian and others within the confine of the nation should as a matter of necessity contribute to the maintenance of the sector and its constant upgrading. School and other education managers must ensure proper utilisation of any funds made available to them to ensure that all requisite materials and facilities are provided to engender enhanced learning and improved performance in all examinations.

Lack of discipline

We have earlier stated in the course of this lecture that we were under strict discipline in schools in the immediate post-colonial era. That phenomenon was due to

cooperation between the parents and teachers towards ensuring full realization of the national educational objectives for the benefit of all. Then teachers could administer commensurate punishment on learners, without bullying from parents. Students then were very respectful to their teachers who could challenge them whenever they erred, but that has since become a thing of the past. Headteachers, principals and inspectors no longer supervise teaching and other activities in the school as was the case before, so this negligence of supervision has taken its toll on the discipline that hitherto existed in the education sector in Nigeria. Whereas, discipline is a key to propelling learning in the student, because a good learner who would perform excellently must have been a disciplined person or otherwise, he would not be a good learner. If the headteachers and teachers cannot enforce discipline in schools, how would learning take place when the environment is not conducive for such and how can performance of the student improve in such circumstances.

Meddlesomeness

There are too many forms of meddlesomeness in the running of schools today from government with numerous directives and incessant instructions to principals, summoning of teachers for verification

exercise every now and then as well as inviting them to too many meetings, which could often cause distraction and is indeed causing distraction. This in turn takes its toll on quality of teaching, a product of lack of adequate supervision. Teachers are sometimes indiscriminately sent to schools where the principals have no authority over them as they may be queried if they insisted on disciplining these untouchables because they were sent there by someone high-up in the system, who could truncate the career of a 'stubborn' principal who would not 'play ball'. All of these forms of meddlesomeness in the daily administration of schools result in lowering the morale of the school managers and teachers and thereby impact negatively on students' performance, which of course does start with examinations nor end with it.

Cultism

Cultism is also a major contributing factor to low level of students' performance in public examinations. Students believe membership of cult groups will facilitate easy access to high grades without the commensurate hard work. Of course, it is obvious that cultism militate against hard work, creates environmental fears which distract from effective learning, it occupies their members' time by engaging them in distractive evil engagements. Membership creates chaos and pandemonium at all times. So cultism causes learning to

suffer. Cultism also causes teaching to suffer, because proper teaching can only take place in the atmosphere of peace and harmony.

The Teacher Factor

One of the most serious causes of the low-level performance of students in public examinations by students in Nigeria is the poor teacher background or poor teacher attitude toward the teaching process, and as such adversely affects students' performance in Nigerian public examinations.

As a researcher and a teacher in education with some emphasis on public examining and being familiar with the examining system, I can say without fear of contradiction whatsoever, that the public examining system in Nigeria be it the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board, the National Examinations Council, the West African Examinations Council or the National Business and Technical Examinations Board, they are very thorough in following the necessary steps in constructing test items, carrying out a very rigorous process in ensuring that the items do not discriminate against anybody. Teachers are not often retrained to equip them with modern skills in the various areas of teaching and learning process. They need updating their knowledge and requisite skills to successfully carry out

their function of imparting knowledge and skills in their students. This trend of not fully equipping the teachers through training and retraining teachers for effectiveness has very much been responsible for the poor performance of secondary school students in public examinations. They are also sometimes poorly remunerated and thus resulting in teacher low morale level. Ill-motivated teachers cannot be expected to perform optimally. And if they do not perform optimally, how can they inculcate high-level performance in their students. When teachers in public schools are allowed to stay away from schools and thus, away from teaching, a situation that does not augur well for learning, their grievances were addressed early enough, how can they motivate their students to perform well in examinations. Yet, it is only effective learning that engenders high level performance. It thus means that proprietors, particularly, governments, at various levels are partially responsible for the abysmal performance of our dear children and our future in these examinations, for often failing to address teachers' grievances promptly.

Policy or programme summersaults

Several times, programmes are revised after being implemented without any reason to do so. Policy and programmes are not informed by any diagnostic evaluation. Their revision are not also informed by

proper programme evaluation, curriculum which has not been evaluated to determine their implementability and the level of their implementation and the successes they have achieved or their failures and the reason for these before they are revised. It is known that in Nigeria many new occupants of offices do not normally continue with the policies and programmes of the previous administrations.

We often spend so much time on reviewing existing policies and programmes or such policies and programmes are often abandoned or reviewed and modified, and perhaps new hands are brought in to 'revamp' them, meaning that in most cases, it is starting afresh again or embarking on new ones. The cycle continues without any appreciable progress. It also happens in the educational scene where programmes are not allowed to mature before being modified. We had not fully implemented the 6-3-3-4 before embarking on 9-3-4 with no substantial difference in what is happening on ground. This development does not make for effective learning.

Lack of Strong Moral and Ethical Orientation

The fact that in the mid-1970's, Religious and Moral instructions were either abolished or relegated to the background had in no small measure contributed to the decline in performance of students we are currently

experiencing in the country with attendant increase in the rate of crime we are witnessing in our country today. Though Nigeria recognizes Religion and Nigerians are very religious, yet the teaching of ethics and moral values has been relegated to the background and when it comes to this, we talk of secularism, which is neither here nor there. It is a naked fact that we are rather multi-religious state. In fact, we are actually principally a two- or three-religious nation and this has not been properly emphasised and adequately taken care of in the curriculum. This trend results in a disconnect between precepts and practice, thereby encouraging indolence on the parts of all stakeholders with regard to teaching and learning process in our secondary schools and the concomitant poor performance in public examinations in Nigeria.

Change in Value and the resultant high level greed in the polity

Change in value system is a major cause of the under-performance of secondary school students in examinations in general and in public examinations in particular. The days when sacrifice was made in place of grabbing in Nigeria has become a thing of the past, self-aggrandisement and interest has completely overtaken our core value system of diligence and honesty.

In the past, we were a people whose religion played a good deal in regulating our lives, but today we are seemingly more religious than the past, yet we commit more crime than in the past due to changes in our value system that was perhaps a consequence of our thirty month civil war. As a child I grew up to know that the word 'Ebira' stood for good character and every Ebiraperson whether in Kogi, FCT, Nasarawa or Edo was meant to stand for that and it was mostly so. However, immediately after that war, everything changed and people from that clime where I also come from imbibed some foreign attitudes and values that run counter to good character, hence, level of killing that took place in the place very recently. We can replicate the same for many a Nigerian community, otherwise how can we explain the issue of incessant communal [inter- and intra-communal] crises that we have experienced through the length and breadth of this country. The resultant effect is that students will under-perform under such circumstance, because they need a peaceful atmosphere to be able to learn well and perform well. And only a return to our original value system will engender such.

Effects of Poor Attitude to Secondary Schooling in Nigeria

The following figures show the immediate effects of poor attitude of students to learning as the concomitant examination malpractices in its various forms.



Figure 1a: Candidate brings out copied material from his thigh

Source: <http://mypenmypaper.wordpress.com>

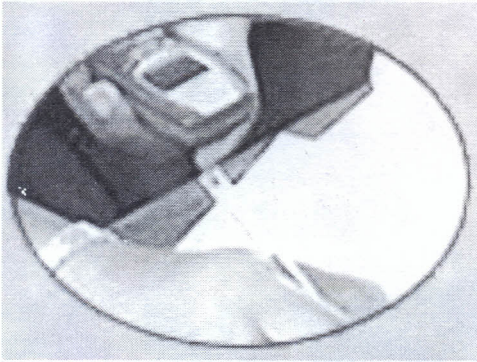


Figure 1b: Student copying from handset

Source: <http://caemi.org/>



Figure 1c: Candidates passing copied material to each other

Source: feathersproject.wordpress.com



Figure 1d: Students caught cheating

Source: 234next.com

The figures above clearly depict that hard work has become a thing of the past and so learning is the one that suffers and when that happens, then the student cannot but under-perform as a natural consequence.

The figures shown below equally give very vivid graphical illustrations of students' under-performance in public examinations using the West African Examinations Council conducted examinations as the baseline for some subjects.

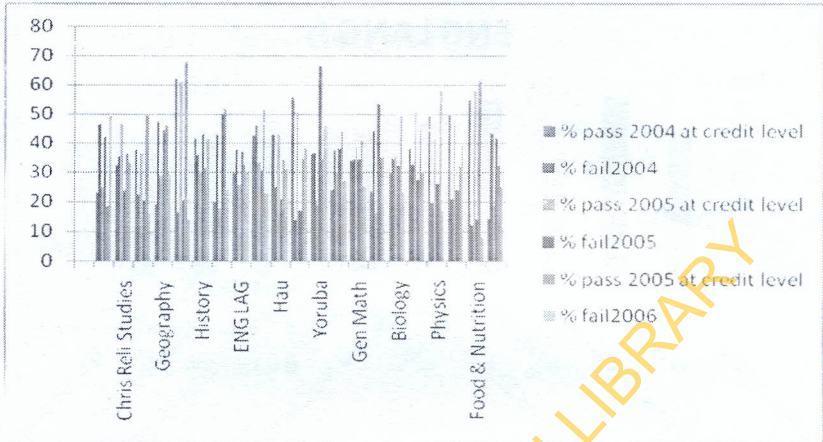


Figure 2 General performance of candidates from 2004 to 2006

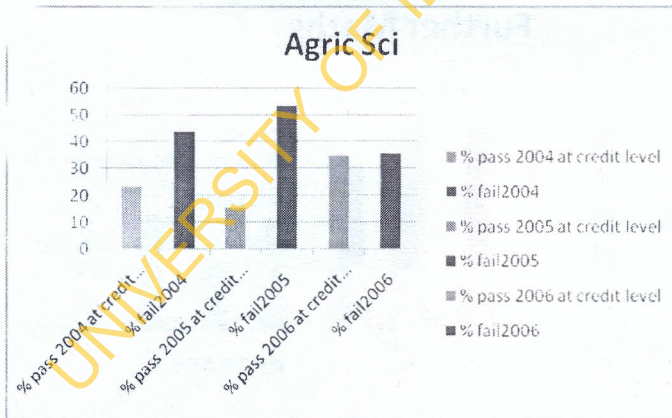


Figure 2a: Students' Performance in WAEC Agric Science in 2004 -2006

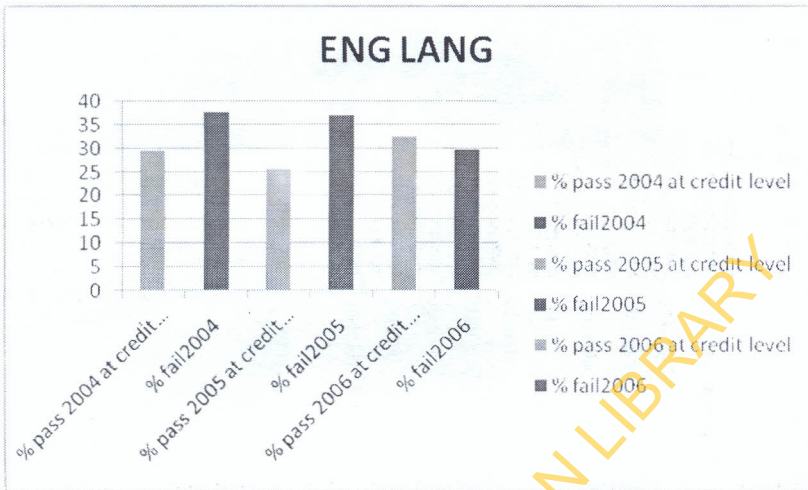


Figure 2b: Students' Performance in WAEC English Language in 2004 -2006

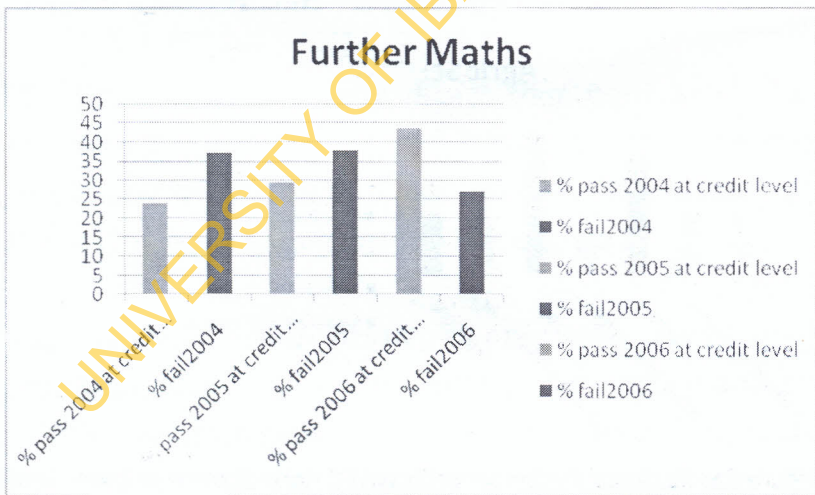


Figure 2c: Students' Performance in WAEC Further Maths in 2004 -2006

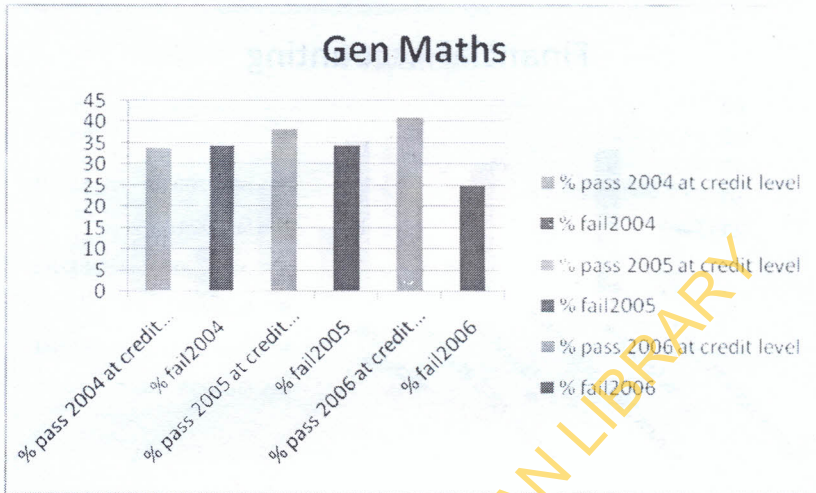


Figure 2d: Students' Performance in WAEC General Maths in 2004 -2006

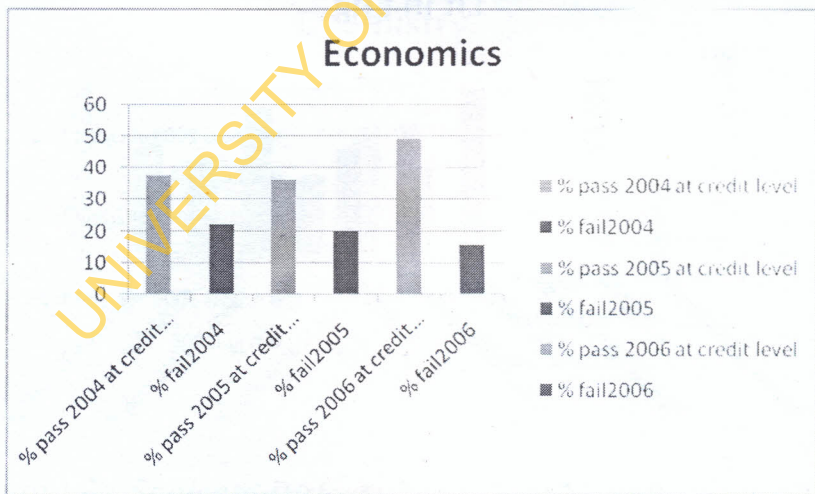


Figure 2e: Students' Performance in WAEC Economics in 2004 -2006

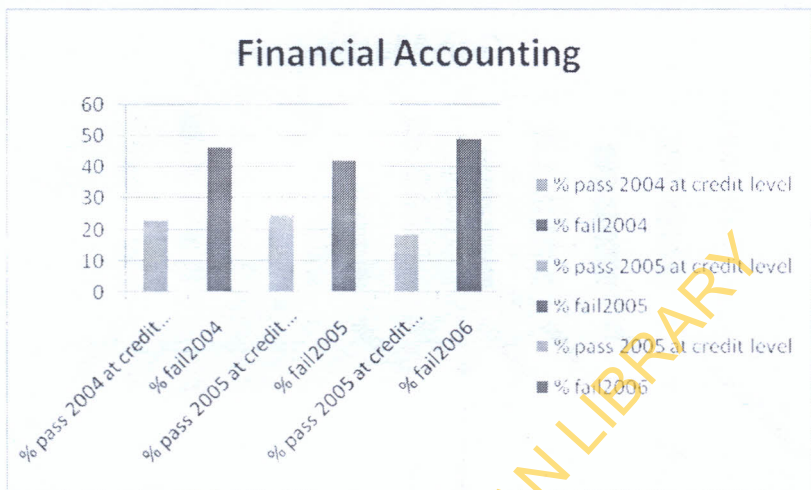


Figure 2f: Students' Performance in WAEC Financial Accounting in 2004 -2006

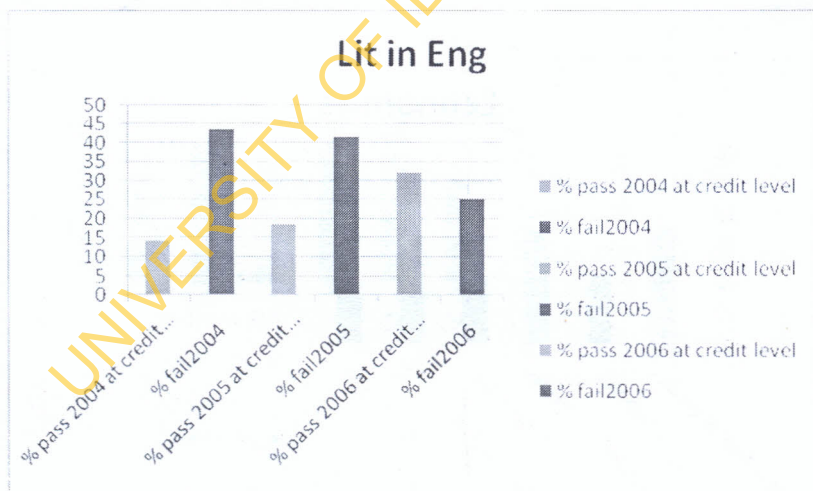


Figure 2g: Students' Performance in WAEC Lit in English in 2004 -2006

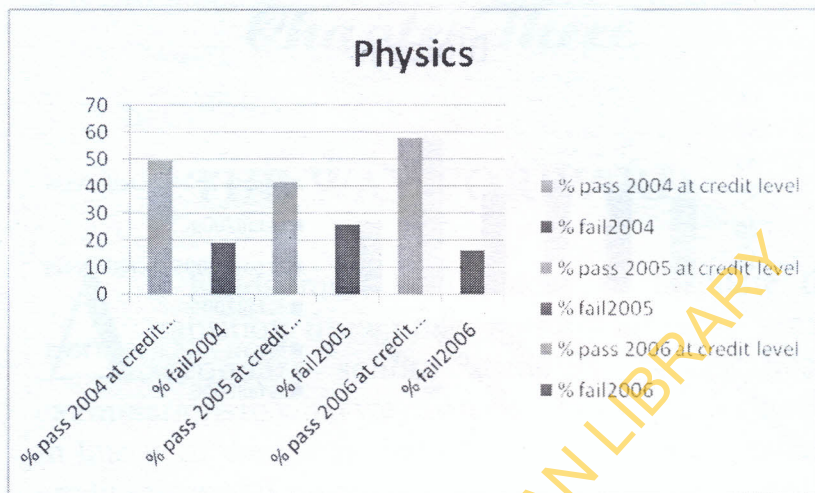


Figure 2h: Students' Performance in WAEC Physics in 2004 -2006

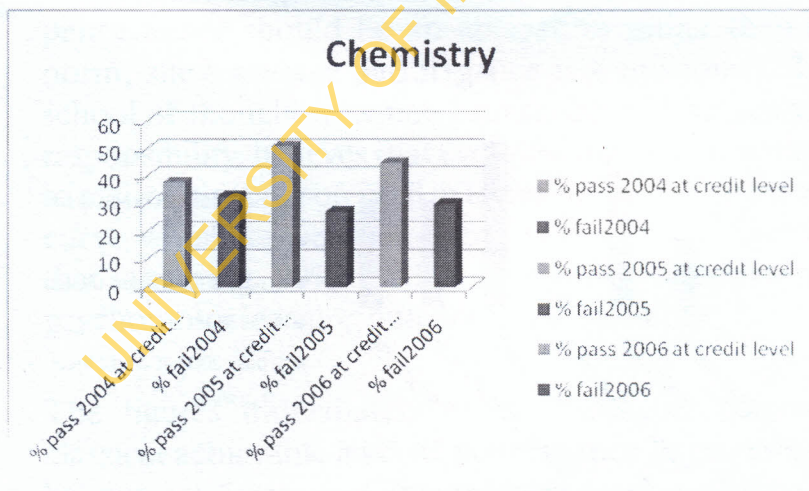


Figure 2i: Students' Performance in WAEC Chemistry in 2004 -2006

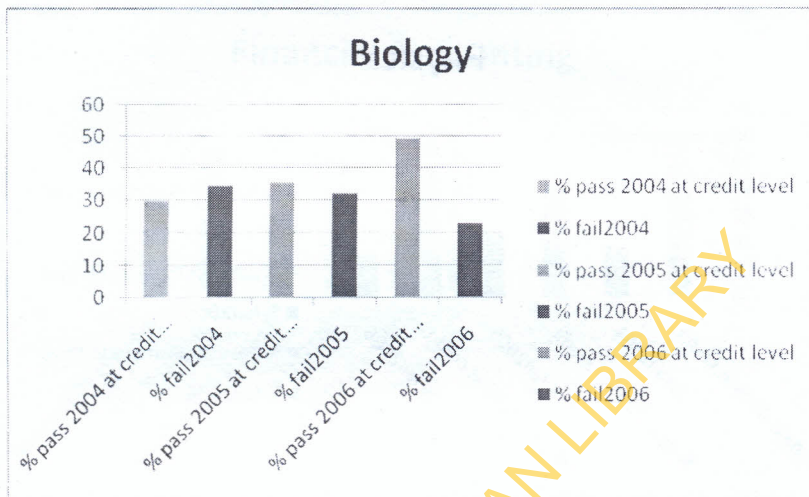


Figure 2j: Students' Performance in WAEC Biology in 2004 -2006

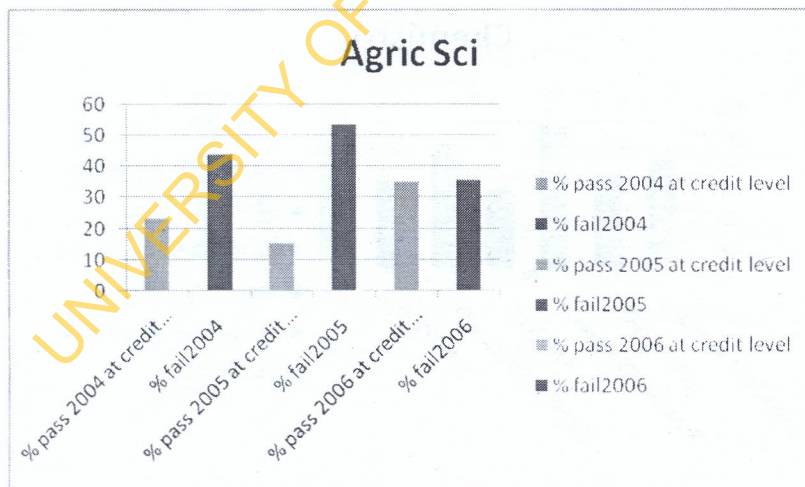


Figure 2k: Students' Performance in WAEC Agric Science in 2004 -2006

Chapter Three

THE WAY FORWARD

All hands must be on deck to facilitate the transition from under-performances by senior secondary school students in certificate examinations to what we can term as super-performance in line with the thesis that all and sundry can perform creditably well if given the requisite support in regard to the identifiable differences in the individuals' learning abilities, which is the crux of the postulation of the mastery learning advocates. To them, normal curve performance should be an aberration rather than the norm, since average performance is a misnomer. This school of thought to which I subscribe with all sense of responsibility, believes that every human can be assisted to realize his/her potential in terms of negatively skewed curve, which implies high degree performance, implying that attaining 90% student cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning outcomes is a feasibility.

The figures immediately below show the perceived classical achievable level of performance as represented by normal curve and the mastery level performance represented by the negatively skewed curve.

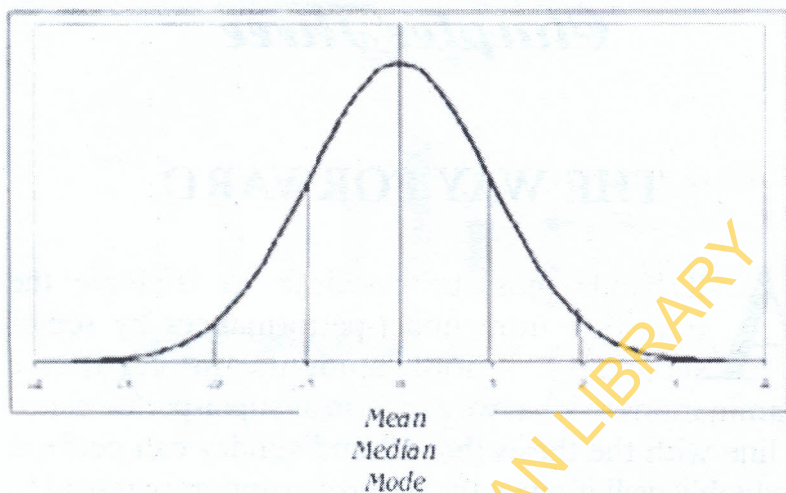
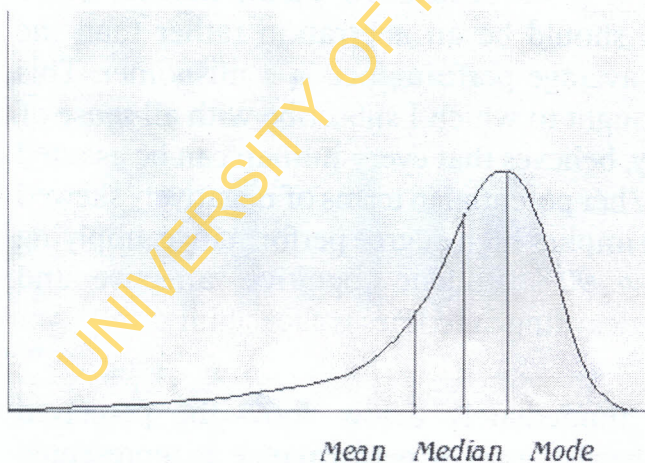


Figure 3a: Normal curve depicting the traditional perspective on performance



NEGATIVELY SKEWED DISTRIBUTION

Figure 3b: the Mastery learning perspective on student performance

These curves respectively illustrate the perspectives of those expecting only average performance in examinations and that which proposes above 90% students' performance. The point being made here is that it is possible that the current students' under-performance in secondary school public examinations can be turned to super-achievement in same, if every hand is on deck and brace up and work together for the improvement of learning outcomes in our secondary schools and for the nation's posterity.

Setting up social orientation centres:

We are all likely to agree that we seem to have lost our original value and orientation of industry and working hard to patiently achieve positive and lasting results. In the days of old, Nigerians were hard working and possessed good values, cherishing good name much more than riches of this world. Teachers no longer believe that there is greater reward in heaven, so they abandon their primary responsibility of effective teaching which includes establishing fatherly and motherly [friendly] rapport with their students in order to propel their interest in what they are teaching them as their teachers. As earlier pointed out, there is decadence all over the place in Nigeria, and everyone behaves in the manner of 'to your tent O Israel', with little or no concern for the welfare and well-being of the students. Quite a

significant number of parents have become moral bankrupt. This trend by extension becomes the lot of their wards. It is obvious that moral bankruptcy essential leads to indolence, while indolence cannot but beget under-performance, because only the diligent worker would perform excellently well in his endeavour.

If Nigeria must wake up and work towards achieving the vision 20-2020, her teachers must brace up, update themselves and work very hard to redeem the decadence in the secondary school which actually is the preparatory ground for future leaders. It is in the secondary education system that the character of the student is moulded and preparation for work and leadership occur, the tertiary education system only consummates the process. Thus, if the tertiary system of education in Nigeria has already begun to inculcate character building in the student as does the University of Ibadan Centre for Social Orientation, it behoves the secondary education segment of the education sector of Nigeria to do so, so that better future for Nigeria can be assured. The Centre will be willing to assist any school that requires such assistance. By establishing such units in our schools, we will be building a better future for Nigeria and indeed Africa, as every 4th black man is a Nigerian. In addition to this, it would go a long way to build the future of our youngsters, if school counselors are recruited for every

school and are no longer saddled with teaching workload so that they can give the necessary academic and social orientation to students to assist them improve their performance in public and internal examinations.

Making deliberate efforts to improve our national behaviour

Leaders should make deliberate efforts to give themselves a new but positive orientation to lead exemplary lifestyles, whether they are political or traditional/religious. It is a well-known fact that students of secondary school age learn more effectively by observation, so if Nigerian leaders of all spectra would lead exemplary lives through hard work, honesty, transparency and accountability, our children of secondary school age will in turn imbibe good habits and behaviours. The Nigerian traditional system of transmission of values from one generation to another was through observation and application of the outcomes of what we saw the elders do as a way of life. And it worked for centuries for our forebears; it can also work for us too. Leadership by example is usually termed servant-leader. Jesus and perhaps other religious leaders of old exemplified this type of leadership. But can we find such leaders among our teachers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, political leaders and what have you today? If the answer is in the negative, then we all need re-

orientation, so that we can secure the future of Nigeria for our children and posterity, as the one way of improving the secondary school students' performance.

Review of curriculum to inculcate commitment on the part of stakeholders

The curriculum should be reviewed to return it to the days when students had to be well grounded in the English Language that is, our official language and language of instruction. We were well grounded in the language even as private candidates for certificate examinations at that level. If we were as private candidates taught on part basis by those who taught the school candidates can be grounded, then how much more energy and time they must have expended in teaching those they had all the time to teach. You ask an economics undergraduate now 'what is meant by mutatis mutandis' he would not know the meaning, most of the time, yet we were taught then ask a geography student what is denudation. He is most unlikely to answer correctly. We can go on and on. The problem, therefore, lies in the adequacy of the content of the curriculum. If this conclusion is correct then there is the need to review the content of the present secondary school curriculum to make it practical oriented to enable our students perform better than they are presently doing.

Cooperation by stakeholders

Essentially, if we are to make head way in improving the secondary school student's performance in public and indeed school examinations, teachers should teach well, administer continuous assessment appropriately rather than inflate marks for the purpose of boosting the performance in external examinations without achieving any appreciable quantum of learning outcomes. Government, parents, communities, the corporate world and well-endowed individuals should invest heavily in the education of our youngsters and the future of our dear and beloved country, the future and hope of Africa, a country designed by the Almighty God for greatness and true emancipation of the African region. Infrastructure should be jointly provided by all. Private schools at all levels should not compete for government funds with their public counterparts because they are owned by government on behalf of the people of Nigeria. The public schools are the hope of the common Nigerian; therefore, they should be properly and adequately funded. The school manager at any level of education in Nigeria should endeavour to manage very well whatever quantum of fund is at their disposal and appropriately utilized for common good by applying such for the purpose for which it was made available.

Honest execution of capital projects in the sector.

If it invariably follows that it is very necessary to make provision of requisite infrastructure and facilities in all secondary schools, then those charged with such responsibility must honestly ensure adequate provision of infrastructures. It thus, portends the fact that all tiers of government must invest in educating their citizenry through honest provision of infrastructures in their own schools.

Proper implementation of educational policies and programmes

The need to ensure religious implementation of educational policies and programmes should be made possible by all stakeholders who should also take adequate interest and participation in their execution. This is more so as it is well known that our problem in this clime is not lack of proper articulation of policies and programmes as they are usually excellently articulated. The main problem is usually inability to religiously implement these most beautifully crafted policies and programmes. I am aware that the current Minister of Education together with the Minister of State has articulated a well-thought out four-year road map to move the sector to the next level, I appeal to them to kindly prosecute the road map to its logical end. Various teaching and evaluation methods that are outcomes of

educational researching should be encouraged and used by the teachers for improved teaching that will result in improved learning. May I here state that the Nigerian Association of Educational Researchers and Evaluators, which I am privileged to currently lead, is very much ready to collaborate with the Ministry, Nigerian Union of Teachers and other stakeholders to carry out researches meant to improve the educational landscape of Nigeria for greater achievement of national goals and objectives. We appeal that government and stakeholders should set up Educational Research Output and Utilisation Bank in order to facilitate the rapid development of the sector and the nation at large.

Constant evaluation

The sector should constantly evaluate the school processes to engender improvement. In fact, before any new programme is begun there should first be diagnostic evaluation of the system, otherwise, such new programme may not be necessary or may be started on wrong footing. Even, when the programme is implementable and useful, it has to be constantly evaluated to keep it on course. Without evaluation, unprofitable programmes may be initiated and implemented without any meaningful results. Wrong implementation of programmes becomes detectable through evaluation and the necessary corrections done immediately to put it right and thus, save costs. For

instance, when mass failure was recorded in the various examinations last year, the first thing to have been done would have been a comprehensive evaluation of the secondary education system in order to detect what went wrong and where it went wrong. By that we would be able to frontally locate the problem and so solve it squarely. Constant evaluation of the goings on in our educational system will ensure constant development of the sector and by extension the country.

Commitment by stakeholders

Stakeholders must be thoroughly committed to the total implementation of the secondary education curricula. It is only such commitment to holistic implementation of the curricula that can lead to improved performance in examinations by secondary school students. All unions in the industry should find a way of working together to move the sector forward. Unions should give constant training to their members in order to improve their outputs and make the output qualitative. Unions can form a consortium to fashion best practices in the sector, evolve enforceable ethics as guidelines to regulate the conduct of their members to ensure improved productivity. Unions should either individually or corporately organize summits and ensure that the outcomes of such summits are not only implementable but are also implemented.

Sacrifice on parents and other stakeholders

Investment in education is the greatest form of investment any nation can undertake to propel economic growth and development. Human capital is the most potent instrument of development any nation can possess. The neglect of human capital development represented by education is the doom of national development or it is the stagnation of national development. Therefore, sacrifice by all and sundry stakeholders in the sector, as a national sacrifice for a progressive future of the nation is a must. In fact, since investment is sacrifice made today for tomorrow's enjoyment, it portends that we are saving the future of the country and its citizenry by investing in education. It thus worths its while and should be encouraged by all.

Adequate funding

Funding is an essential agent of development, anywhere in the world. It is a must provision for any meaningful development to take place. Funding provides for infrastructural facilities and instructional materials to aid effective teaching and learning in the school. It is with funds that researches that can facilitate development in the sector can be undertaken. It must be pointed out that without funds, the sector will be stagnant. It is with fund that appropriate training can be carried out, it is with funds that the right calibre of teachers and other

personnel can be recruited and retained for the effectiveness of the sector. As earlier pointed out funding is a duty all stakeholders must be committed to, in order to ensure proper functioning of the system.

In fact, stakeholders including unions should come together to fashion an acceptable model for funding of the education system. While the government should bear the major chunk of funding public schools, other stakeholders should jointly provide funds for the system up to the tune of 20% of whatever government is able to provide to move the sector forward. This contribution by other stakeholders could come in form of providing scholarship, special education levy aside from what the corporate world is contributing by way of tax education presently. This should be jointly managed by the contributors without resorting to administrative bureaucracy. Non-remunerated committee should be saddled with the responsibility for disbursing and overseeing the utilisation of such funds very judiciously.

Cultivating the culture of student time management

Figure 4 below very well illustrate how student can effectively manage his/her time to make him/her attain her/his desired educational objectives.

It could be adapted for use to management of the student's study time management for learning effectiveness and for consequently attaining goals and remaining focused.



Figure 4: Comprehensive student time management components

Source: created by the lecturer

Figure 4 reveals that component A is the global component of the time management cycle where the totality of one's world of life and activities are taking stock of and then match with the total time available to one in a particular period in time. The time horizon could be a year for the global time management, a semester for the macro time management weekly/monthly for the micro which could be in relation only to the learner's study pattern within a daily/weekly time horizon and taking cognizant of the other relevant activities which would also engage his attention within the set period. The learner must be aware that he cannot manage his study time well, if he refuses to have an opportunity cost or opportunity costs for the study time to stay useful to himself and make gain of his academic endeavours. He must, therefore, be ready to make sacrifice and in the time being do away with some other and less useful activities that crave for his time and attention. The three components or variants of time-management can be simultaneously planned for and managed within the same period of time, providing that activities/tasks are prioritized into most essential, essential and not too essential and thereby compartmentalised into the component which they suitably belong.

The table below illustrates a recommended model daily student time-management for effective learning.

Table 1: Recommended Daily Student Time - Management Model for Effective Learning

Task	Time Allocated to Task	Percentage of 24 Hours
Sleep	7 hours	29.2%
General preparation for the day	1 hour	4.2%
Interaction with ICT in relation to learning	1 hour	4.2%
Social activities	2hours	8.3%
Home activities	2 hours	8.3%
Private learning activities	2 hours	8.3%
School Programmes	8 hours	33.3%
Leisure time	30 minutes	2.1%
Others	30 minutes	2.1%
Total	24 hours	100%

Source: Adapted from Onuka (2012: 66)

A critical examination of above table reveals that student can evolve a model time-management for the effectiveness of the Nigerian secondary school student in his or her study. The implication of this model is that it will enable him/her to plan and utilize his or her time effectively to assist him/her to learn effectively and thereby pass well in all examinations. Thus, social activities must be minimized in order to maximize effective study time for the accomplishment of the desired educational objectives. Therefore, the effective student learning time management model is given by $24 - S + Gp + Ct + Sa + Ha + Lt + Th$ {Where S (sleep) [7]; Gp (General preparation) [1]; Ct (Interaction with ICT) [1]; Sa (Social activities) [1]; Ha (Home activities) [2]; Pla (Personal learning activities) [2]; L(School learning activities) [8]; Lt (Leisure time) [□2]; Th (Others) [□2]}. Alternatively the model can be represented as follows: SLE (i.e. Student Learning Effectiveness) = $24 - S - Gp - Ha - Lt - Sa - Ct - Th$. The figures in parenthesis represent the time allocated to each expected activity of the student in 24 hours. The essence of this proposed student time management is to assist both parents and students to plan and utilize their time effectively for improved learning outcomes in our secondary school system and consequently, improved performance of secondary school students in public examinations.

Conclusion

The discourse has located the causes of students' under-performance in the Nigerian secondary education system public examinations on loss of our original values and cultures, moral decadence, inadequate funding, meddlesomeness in the daily running of schools, indolence, corruption, lack of commitment, non-religious implementation of well-articulated programmes, non-application of research findings and lack of proper evaluation of both proposed and on-going policies and programmes. It proposes that these identified causes of students' under-performance in public examinations must be squarely addressed in order to arrest the untoward development in our school system.

The imperative of providing appropriate quantum of funding for the system to recruit and retain well qualified teachers, building infrastructural facilities, purchase and utilized appropriate learning materials for effective teaching etc were stressed. The need to inculcate the spirit of effective time management in the students with a guiding model for time management was also proposed for enhanced learning and the concomitant improved performance by the students. It was further put forward that all stakeholders including teachers' unions should be more committed to

improving the sector by making personal sacrifice, embarking on relevant training programmes, contributing some tokens to improving the funding situation in schools, parents should play their roles of parenting and locus parentis well among other things in order to move forward the sector and improve students' performance.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, S. A. (2011). Effect of Active Review and Discussion on Student Learning Outcomes in Senior Secondary School Economics in Ibadan. A Proposal presented at the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- Block, J. H. (1971). *Mastery Learning – Theory and Practice*. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston Inc.
- Block, J. H. and Anderson, L. W. (1975). *Mastery Learning in Classroom Instruction*. New York: Macmillan Pub. Co. Inc.
- Bloom, B. S., Hasting, J. T. and Madaus, G. F. (1971). *Hanbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*. New York: McGraw & Co.
- Durowoju, E. O. (2012). Effect of Continuous Assessment Modalities on Student Learning Outcomes in Senior Secondary Commerce in Ibadan. A Proposal presented at the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- Ezewu, E. E. (1982). *Beyond Mastery Learning*. Ibadan: institute of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

- Onuka, A. O. U. (2005). A Review of Fund Allocation to Nigerian Federal University System. In the West African Journal of Education XXV.35-49.
- Onuka, A. O. U. (2007a). Teacher-initiated student-peer assessment: A means of improving learning-assessment in large classes. In International Journal of African & African-American Studies 6(1) 23-29.
- Onuka, A. O. U. (2007b). Funding the Nigerian University Education: The Role of the Various stakeholders. In East Journal of Education Research and Policy 1.
- Onuka, A. O. U & Junaid, I. O. (2007). Influence of Feedback Mechanism on Students Performance in Economics in Kogi State, Nigeria. In International Journal of Distance Education (IJODE) Vol. 2, pp 56 – 61.
- Onuka, A. O. U. and Durowoju, E. O. (2010). Causes, Methods, Effects of and Solutions to Examination Malpractices in Nigeria. A Paper presented at a Round Table Discussion organized by Orderly Society Trust (OST), Vicyoria Island, on 16 September, 2010.
- Onuka, A. O. U. (2011). Stakeholders' Role in Fund Mobilisation and Utilisation in Nigerian Public Universities. A Research Report submitted to Senate

of University of Ibadan.

Onuka, A. O. U. (2012). Distance Learners' Time Management and Learning Effectiveness. In Stoilov, T. (Ed.) Time Management. Janeza Tidine 9, Coratia: Intech. Pp 77-88.

Umoru-Onuka, A. O. (1997). Implementing Mastery Learning Strategy in Nigeria: Investment Implication. A Paper delivered at WAEC Monthly Seminar, 20 February, 1997. Lagos, Nigeria: The West African Examinations Council

Umoru-Onuka, A. O. (1999). Adopting Mastery Learning Strategy in Nigeria: The School Manager's Role. A Paper delivered at WAEC Monthly Seminar, January, 1999. Lagos: The West African Examinations Council

WAEC (2000). The West African Senior Secondary Examinations (Private) Chief Examiners' Report Nov./Dec. 2000 (Nigeria).

WAEC (2003). The West African Senior Secondary Examinations (Private) Chief Examiners' Report Nov./Dec. 2003 (Nigeria).

WAEC (2010a). The West African Senior Secondary Examinations (Private) Chief Examiners' Report Nov./Dec. 2010 (Nigeria).

WAEC (2010b). The West African Senior Secondary Examinations (Private) Chief Examiners' Report Nov./Dec. 2010 (Ghana).

WAEC (2010c). The West African Senior Secondary Examinations (Private) Chief Examiners' Report Nov./Dec. 2010 (Sierra Leone)

WAEC (2010d). The West African Senior Secondary Examinations (Private) Chief Examiners' Report Nov./Dec. 2010 (the Gambia)

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY



Adams Onuka was Born in Okeneba, Okene in Kogi State.

He had his primary education which he undertook in Edo and Kogi States respectively. He had secondary education privately in Oyo and Edo States. In 1978, he gained admission into the then university of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria graduating with an honours degree in business in 1981. He got a diploma in Theology from Immanuel College of Theology and Christian Education in 1998. He was ordained an Anglican Cleric in 1984. He was appointed Canon in residence at St. Barnabas Cathedral, Ilorin and appointed Assistant Chaplain from 1993 to 1997, and served as Ag. Chaplain in 1998 and from 1999 to 2005 at the Chapel of the Resurrection, University of Ibadan; He changed from full-time cleric to part time in 2002 when he got appointed to the staff of the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan where he did his master's and **PHD** programmes.

He has served on editorial board of several journals and is currently the chair, editorial board of Higher Education Research and Policy Network. He is currently President of the Nigerian Association of Educational Researchers and Evaluators (NAERE), a member of the Nigerian Association for Administration and Planning. He published very widely and in several areas of management education and evaluation, he has over 70 publications to his credit.

ISBN 978-978-52323-5-6

