

Reasons for Continuous Decline of Students' Academic Performance in External Examinations

Egede, N. K.

*Holy Field International School, Abraka, Delta State
E-mail: knegede@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

In recent times, the performance of students in external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) amongst others has continued to decline. Available statistics shows that in 2005 only 27.53% of students who sat for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination obtained five credit passes and above including mathematics and english language, while in 2008, it was 13.74%. This study aims at identifying the reasons for continuous decline of students performance in external examinations. The findings of the study indicate among other things that the continuous decline of student's performance in external examination is attributed to student's incessant activities on social media. It is therefore, recommended that private organizations should begin to organize educative competitions among students and schools such as debates, while government should establish-well furnished libraries in all schools.

Keywords: *Education, Continuous Decline, Performance, External Examination*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to the development of any nation. A nation cannot be said to be developed when a good number of her youths are not educated. Education therefore, is the process that helps to develop human beings physically, mentally, socially, morally and technologically to enable them function effectively in any society. It is in view of this that the National Educational goals were built on: the inculcation of national consciousness and unity; inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society; the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical, social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute meaningfully to the development of the society (NPE, 2004).

Education is the best gift a nation can give to her citizens, most especially to her youth. It has been recognized globally as a key to economic development (Olubanwo, 2005). This is because the development of any nation depends largely on the quality of her education. Obiodogwu and Egede (2013) opine that human capital resource is the most valuable resource any nation can have. This is because the physical capital cannot yield rapid economic growth without the human capital. Hence a nation is said to be technologically developed if majority of her workforce are well trained and educated. It is a potent instrument for growth and development

of an economic, political, social and human resources (Fafunwa, 1995). In recent times, the performance of students in external examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) amongst others has continued to deteriorate. Available statistics shows that in 2005 only 27.53% of students who sat for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination obtained five credit passes and above including mathematics and English language, 15.56%, 25.54%, 13.74%, 25.99%, 24% and 30.99% in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively, while that of National Examination Council (NECO) was 12%, 11%, 8% and 32% in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively (Ademola, 2014). These results are discouraging especially to parents and guardians who may have labored hard to see that their children and wards successfully pass through this vital level of education.

Causes of Continuous Poor Performance of Students

The continuous poor performance of students can be attributed to so many factors of which both the students, parents/guardians, the government, stakeholder in the educational sector and private individuals are to share the blame. Some of the causes are:

Students and Social Media: Since the inception of Facebook in 2004 (popularized in 2006), Blackberry, with its blackberry messenger feature known as BBM, 2go, Yahoo messenger, Twitter, and whatsapp amongst other, students have become so addicted that they no longer have time for their studies, they allocate more precious time to irrelevant chats and conversations in the internet that will add little or nothing to their life (Moon, 2011). They watch pornographic videos even when in class and joining social groups online like, “*Adolescents and relationship*”, “*Teenagers and Love*”, “*Singles and Love Search*” among other groups where irrelevant issues are discussed at the expense of surfing the net for research on relevant issues or subject matters that would have helped them in achieving greater results in academics.

In addition, abbreviations such as “u” in place of you, “av” in place of have, “dey” in place of they, “n” in place of and, “Wot” in place of what, to mention but a few, which they use on social media with their peers are now used in official examinations unknowingly to them as a result of consistent usage of such abbreviations (Andy, 2010). Furthermore, students no longer spend their leisure time reading novels, magazines, newspapers, or listen to educating programmes on radio and television rather they place priority on African magic where they watch all sorts of irrelevant movies. In relation to this, Obama (2008) in his speech stressed that children cannot achieve great unless they raise their expectations and turn off television set. A child can tell the story line of a film or movie which he /she watched from start to the end without any mistake and can even go further to mention the names of all the actors and actresses but he/she cannot tell you the names of his/her teachers. They know the title and duration of all home movies, music and their

artists, names off all football clubs in Europe and players but cannot mention the subjects they offer in school. The question now is “how will such a student perform well in academics?”

Parents and Guardian Attitude: Our parents and guardians, who were supposed to guide their children and wards towards hard work, do otherwise by contracting with willing school authorities in hiring a specialist to impersonate their child or ward or to dictate to the candidate in the examination hall or hidden in a private secured room (Ijaya, 2004). They rather sponsor them in examination malpractices. Most parents have become so occupied with their daily businesses that they neglect the supervision of moral and academic development of their children. Many parents have misguided and lured their children into fields or subject areas which they are not competent enough to be as a result of their selfish desires (Egwunyenga, 2000). Prior to the new Millennium, parents were seen committed to their children’s academics, going through their school notebooks daily trying to ensure that they achieve or acquire knowledge in school each day, bought textbooks and other learning materials but today all these attributes of parents have gone into extinction (Whawo, 2000). The slogan of today is “He who passes examination is intelligent” not minding how the success was achieved. Parents now encourage their children to go look for examination centre known as “*Miracle Centres*” where they can pay money to get the needed five credits passes and above, which include mathematics and English language (Eweniyi, 2002). This has made our students grow so lazy to Study owing to their mindset of achieving good grades even when they do not work for it. Students no longer cultivate that habit of research and reading instead they search for short ways to success without the content.

Private Schools: Private schools cannot be left out of blame for examination misconduct. Most private schools exist today for the purposed of high profit – making in Lieu of the future of our future leaders. In most private schools today we can see a graduate of sociology teaching physics and chemistry, or a graduate of political science teaching mathematics and English language (Ogwuazor et al, 2008). One begins to wonder, if any relationship exist between sociology and physics or chemistry. What is the relationship between political science and English language or mathematics? How do one expect students under such teachers to perform well? All these questions await answers. In most cases, a single teacher handles three to four subjects from Junior Secondary one to Senior Secondary three. This invariably has led to lack of coherence between the teachers’ classroom attitude and their expressed belief on active methods of interaction with the students (Andree et al, 1998). They have capitalized on the unemployment state of the nation to marginalize labour not minding the implications on students and the nation at large. Students no longer repeat classes when they do not perform well rather they gain automatic promotion (Egede, 2009). Often times, students are made to pay some amount of money so as to be rendered assistance in the examination hall. Assistance fees are now paid as school fees in most of these private schools (Egede, 2009).

The Government: The government has its own share of the blame as most public schools lack the needed facilities that can facilitate effective teaching and learning, such as conducive learning environment, and laboratory for science practicals amongst others. What we hear today is “**alternative to practicals**” instead of practicals which at the end of the experimental session, students have no real opportunity of understanding or learning the process of doing physics or chemistry practicals (Achor et al, 2012). This is because the instruments needed for these practicals are not available. A science student will pass through SS I to SS III and cannot identify a single apparatus. The government should place priority on education by providing up to 26% of the national budget for education as recommended by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Over the years there have been incessant strike actions by teachers as a result of nonpayment of salaries and other fringe benefits leaving the students with no choice than to roam the street. Teachers who are the character molders of the future leaders are not motivated enough to carry out their duties of producing leaders who can take up the mantle tomorrow. A research carried out in 2014 by Egede shows that teachers perform better when they are motivated. Motivation may be in the form of regular payment of salaries as at when due, regular promotion, sponsorship to seminars and workshops, provision of adequate teaching and learning materials and other Fringe benefits.

According to Davidson (2005), motivated teachers are willing to provide quality education and are determined to give their best to achieve maximum output. Performance and motivation are difficult to distinguish (Dessler, 2005). Lack of teacher’s motivation has negative effect on the educational standard of a nation as students are deprived of the needed knowledge that will see them through WASSCE, and NECO as well as other external examination. The government has failed to realize this fact hence she has no regard for the teachers thereby putting the future of students and the nation in jeopardy. Moreso, when new curriculum and designs are introduced, teachers are not trained to the new learning and teaching activities and strategies, as such they find it difficult to impart the needed knowledge and skills.

Nonchallant Attitude of Teachers: Most teachers on their part have failed to be committed to their job, they feel it is not their business and are only concerned about their monthly salaries. They handle important lessons with laxity and have failed to realize their important role in nation building. Thus, teaching is used as a stepping stone to other professions. This has seriously affected the quality of products of education.

Private Organisation: Most private organizations have failed the nation. Apart from Cowbell Milk Company which organizes national mathematics competition annually, the only programmes most private organizations organize are beauty pageants, Maltina Street Dance, Star Quest, Big Brothers Africa, Gulder Ultimate search, among others. The only talents being exhibited by our youths today are

music, dancing, acting, and comedies. They no longer have flair for mathematics, chemistry or physics. We now hardly hear of debate competitions among school rather everyone wants to be Nollywood Star or a Music artist.

Implications of Continuous Poor Performance of Students

If this trend continues without being adequately checked, then the national goal of producing:

- * Self-reliant citizens cannot be achieved.
- * There shall be moral decadence in the society owing to the relative extinction of moral training at the secondary school level
- * There shall be continuous increases in the level of unemployment as a result of lack of creative and innovative minds which students are supposed to acquire at the secondary school level.
- * Lose of societal moral values will give birth to high rate of corruption in the country as most persons who are not qualified for positions will do anything possible to get such position .
- * There shall be escalation of crime rate such as terrorism, oil bunkering, kidnapping, armed robbery, amongst others. More so, the level of illiteracy, poverty, and hunger shall be at the increasing side, thereby worsening the insecurity situation in the country.
- * More so, the aspiration of parents to see their children become educated and highly placed in the society becomes a mere dream.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The continuous decline of student's performance in external examination is attributed to student's incessant activities on social media, private school insensitivity to students' future and negligence on part of parents, teachers and the government. The educational achievement of a child depends largely on the virtues of competent professionally dynamic teachers and parental sensitivity to the child's academic needs. Teachers, play fundamentally undisputable roles in the educational growth and development of students and as such teachers failure to meet up to their tasks of teaching and guiding students has given rise to different social, political, and economic misconduct. This therefore, implies that the operational performance of teachers and parents could make or mar the future of Nigeria learners. Hence, the academic success of the Nigerian learners should be given a top priority by parents, teachers and all the stakeholders in the educational sector. This is because the economic development of any nation depends on quality of her education. From the foregoing, some recommendations are proffered.

- * The Nigerian teachers and parents have strategic roles to play. As the major executors of the government policies on education, they should as much as possible inculcate the spirit of hard work in students and discourage all forms examination misconducts.

- * The government on its part should see teaching as the “mother” of all professions and provide teachers with adequate motivation. More so, the government should make funds available for the provision of conducive learning environment that will challenge the students to work hard.
- * A corrupt free committee should be set up to check the activities of private schools both in rural and urban areas from time to time.
- * Seminars and workshops should be organized where students would be told the implication or consequences of their regular activities on social media and how the internet can be of better assistance to their academic life.
- * Private organizations should have a rethink and begin to organize educative competitions among students and schools such as debates. They should give scholarship to outstanding students so as to promote hard-work among students.
- * Government should establish-well furnished libraries in all schools.

REFERENCES

- Achor E. E., Seraphina M. K. and Orokpo C. A.** (2012). Gender Dimension in Predictors of Students’ performance in Mock-SSCE Practical and theory Chemistry Examinations in Some Secondary Schools in Nigeria. Scientific and Academic Publishing, e-ISSN: 2162-8467; 2(2):16-22.
- Ademola-Olateju, B.** (2014), Nigeria and its Declining Education- The Way forward. Premium Times, August 19, 2014.
- Andree T., Josseh E. L. and Barojas J.** (1998). Connecting Research in Physics Education with Teacher Education. An I.C.P.E Book, Published by International Commission on Physics Education 1998.
- Andy, B.** (2010). *Social Networking: Teachers Blame Facebook and Twitter for pupils’ poor grades. The telegraph. Retrieved August 22, 2014 from www.*
- Davidson, E.** (2005). The Pivotal Role of Teachers Motivation in Tanzania. Hakielimu Working Paper. 1-10 .
- Dessler, G.** (2005). *Human Resource Management* (10th ed) India: Pearson Practice Hall.
- Egede, N. K.** (2009). *Common Practice on Our Campuses.* Agbor: Royal Pace Publications.
- Egede, N. K.** (2014). The Impact of Motivation on Teacher’s Performance in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. An Unpublished Postgraduate Diploma in Education thesis submitted to institute of Education, Delta State University, Abraka.
- Egwunyenga, E. J.** (2000). *Essentials of School Administration.* Benin City: Justice-Jeco Publishers.
- Eweniyi, G. D.** (2002). The Efficacy of Moral/Religious Counselling in Checking Examination Malpractice Among Secondary School Students in Ogun State. *The Nigerian Journal of Guidance and counselling*, 1, 47-60.
- Fafaunwa, A. B.** (1995). *History of Education in Nigeria* (Rev. Ed). Ibadan: Samadex Nigeria Commercial Enterprises Ltd
- Federal Republic of Nigeria** (2004). *National Policy on Education.* Yaba, Lagos: NERDC.
- Ijaya, N. Y. S.** (2004). Agents of Examination Malpractices in Nigeria Public Examination: The Strongest Links. *Publication of the National Association of Educational Researchers and Evaluators*, 5(1), 6-7

- Moon, A. L.** (2011). The Impact of Facebook on undergraduate Academic Performance: Implications for Educational Leaders, Retrieved April 1, 2013. From www.condor.cmich.edu.
- Obama, B.** (2008). Barack Obama on libraries: Bound to the word: Keynote address at the Opening General Session at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago, June 23rd - 29th, Retrieved from www.boulderlibrary.worldpress.com
- Obiodogwu, O. A. and Egede, N. K.** (2013) Scholar's Economics. Agbor: Royal Pace Publications.
- Ogwuazor, K. E. and Nwaham, C. O.** (2008). Nigeria Educational System: Issues, problems and prospects.
- Oslo Declaration UNESCO and High Level Group Meeting on Education for All (EFA).** Available at http://www.unesco.org/education/oslo_declaration.final_17dec08.pdf
- Olubanwo, B. V.** (2005). Quality Assurance in Higher Education. *An Overview Toward Quality in Africa High Education*, 163-169
- Whawo, D. D.** (2000). *An Introduction to the Study of Education*. Asaba: Alcel Concerns