

Kola (2014) in a paper review that centred on causes of poor academic performance in West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination especially in Nigeria argued that mass failure of students in these public examinations could be traced to several factors that can be compartmentalized into the domains of parents, students, teachers, schools, the language of instruction, government and the society among others. The paper concludes that this mass failure constitutes wastage on investment in secondary education. The paper then recommends that since academic performance is a virile instrument to the national development of any nation; all concerned stakeholders must be responsive to their roles in order to restore hope to the current grotesque academic performance of students in the West African Examination Council (WAEC) examinations in Nigeria. This study is similar to the present work in that it discusses the causes of poor performance in school certificate examinations though it focuses on West Africa Senior School Certificate Examinations in Nigeria. However, whereas the paper focuses on causes of poor performance in West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination and ignoring the role of WAEC as an assessment body in influencing performance of candidates in those examinations, this present study is necessary because it seeks to explain the influence of the Cameroon GCE Board as an examination body in the performances of candidates.

Akuro and Ngozi (2014) in “Trend in the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Mathematics Performance of students in the North West region of Cameroon” published in the Journal of Education and Practice, to portray the trend in the General Certificate of Education (GCE), Ordinary Level mathematics performance of secondary school students of the North West Region of Cameroon, across the years 2007-2013. The aim of this had been simply to clearly portray patterns in students’ performance and to know whether with the passage of time, student performance has been improving, worsening or even remaining constant. Consequently, such information is critical to education policy makers and other stakeholders as to the formulation of policies and measures that could either improve or maintain students’ performance. To carry out the research an expost factor research design was used. Furthermore, the population of the study was all the 171,187 Form Five secondary school students of the North West Region of Cameroon that sat for this examination across the years 2007-2013. No sampling was used since the results of all the students in the population were considered in the study. The findings showed that there was a decline in the performance of students in mathematics over the years. From these results, they therefore forecasted that considering the downward trend in the GCE ordinary level mathematics performance of the students for the last three years, students’ performance for the fourth coming year could be horrible if nothing is done. The gap in this study is that it investigates only trends

in performance in GCE Ordinary Level Mathematics in the North West Region of Cameroon without any focus on the causes of the changing trends. Apart from this, the study also does not mention the contributions of the Cameroon GCE Board to the changing trends in performance in Mathematics. This study is important in that it investigates trends in performance of candidates in mathematics examination organised by the Cameroon GCE Board and though it highlights a downward trend in performance in Mathematics, it does not investigate the role of the Board in causing this downward trend,

Lebata (2014) carried out an investigation of performance in the Biology 5090 at some selected High Schools in Lesotho, submitted in accordance with the requirements For the Degree of Master of Education – With Specialisation in Natural Science Education at the University Of South Africa. The researcher examines the factors responsible for the poor performance in Biology 5090, suggesting ways in which this performance can be improved upon therein. The researcher states that teacher and teacher quality, English as a medium of instruction, study habits, motivation, and other factors affect students' performance in schools. The gap here is that the researcher focussed on causes of poor performance in Biology and though it deals on a different subject it fails to determine the validity evidence of the examination and to highlight the role of the assessment body on performance.

In a paper presented at the National Universities Commission (NUC) at Abuja, Nigeria by the Chief Executive of the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) on why candidates fail in public examinations Dr. Olatunde A. Aworanti explained the perceived causes of failure in public examinations to include such factors as institutional, environmental psycho-social, home and teacher-related factors and suggested the ways forward to enhance the performances of candidates in public examinations. The paper explains how NABTEB was created in the bid to domesticate the examinations and tailor them towards societal needs and organize examinations that are credible so that certificates offered are respected locally and internationally. He outlines the examinations organized by NABTEB and proposes remedies. The study states that the reliability and validity of examinations among other factors for national interest in achieving national goals and aspirations have been the underlying factors for the establishment of external agencies (examination bodies) like West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO), National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) to conduct both examinations for school candidates and examinations for out-of-school candidates and award certificates to successful candidates in their

areas of career aspirations. This paper is relevant to the study in that it discusses issues related to the performance in examinations organised by NABTEB as well as the influence of reliability and validity in the formation of assessment agencies but it fails to pinpoint the role of NABTEB as an assessment body in influencing the performance of candidates sitting in for the examinations it organizes.

Explaining reasons for mass failure in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) at the Students' Academic Success Summit held at the University of Lagos (Nigeria) on January 24, 2011, the Head of National Office of WAEC, Dr. Iyi Uwadiae, attributed the high failure rates in examinations conducted by the council to several factors. According to him the causes of massive failure in WAEC examinations can be attributed to some candidates' lack of knowledge of common pitfalls, coupled with inadequate coverage of the syllabus, non-familiarity with test format and the lack of strong reading spirit for candidates who prepare for the examinations. He said that WAEC, as a body entrusted with the conduct of the examination, should not be seen as a public enemy because the council does not fail candidates deliberately. This paper highlights the causes of mass failure in examinations organized by WAEC but excludes the fact that WAEC as an assessment body can make errors in its assessment practices that can affect candidates' performances.

In an investigation into causes of poor performance in Accounting at Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Examination in some selected schools, Mwangi (2004) outlines the causes of poor performance in accounting. The research design used for this study was the ex post facto design. Samples were drawn from a target population of public secondary schools that offered Accounting in the years 1999-2003, using the stratified random sampling technique. The research instruments that were used included questionnaires, interview and observation guides. A pilot study was carried out to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments. The analysis of data collected was done using descriptive statistics. The study established that the qualification and experience of head teachers and teachers, availability and adequacy of textbooks, interest of the students in the subject played a significant role in influencing performance in Accounting. The study recommended in-service training service and seminars and that teachers of Accounting should be streamlined. The study is similar to this present study in that it discusses the causes of poor performance of candidates in accounting examination and also in research methodology but the study fails to evaluate the role of the assessment body in influencing candidates' performance which his study seeks to investigate.

In a research project report submitted for registration of the Degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration and Planning, University of Nairobi Maina (2003), which sets out to investigate the causes of poor performance in Kiswahili Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination in a District in Kenya because there has been consistent poor performance in the previous years. For the research methods, the simple random sampling was done to get a sample of 293 students to participate in the research and questionnaires, one for the teachers and the one for the students was used. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. The study which focuses on performance in the kiswahili language concluded that lack of materials and resources, the administrators who emphasise on the use of English over Kiswahili, over loaded teachers and the relative unimportance of Kiswahili are responsible for the poor performance of students in KSCE examinations. The study is important to this study in that it discusses the causes of poor performance in public examination but falls short of investigating the role of the examining body in Kenya in influencing this poor performance.

David (2014) in a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master Of Arts in Rural Development of Sokoine, University Of Agriculture. Morogoro, Tanzania titled “Determinants of Poor Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania” assesses the factors that influence the academic performance of students of selected secondary schools in Sumbawanga District in Tanzania. This examination are organised by National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA). Purposive sampling was used to select the District, Heads of schools and District Secondary Educational officers. Systematic Random Sampling procedures were also used to select students while simple random sampling was employed in selecting teachers as well as parents. In this study the questionnaire, physical interviews and observation approaches were used in data collection. The data were analysed using descriptive analysis and Binary Logistic model for inferential analysis. The study found that the factors that hamper students’ academic performance include truancy among the students, incompetence of English language among students as a language of instruction, the home based factors such as low income of parents and long walking distance from home to school, school environment, shortage of qualified teachers and shortage of well-equipped science laboratories. This study is relevant to the present in both methodology and its evaluation of factors causing poor performance. However, the gap here is that the study fails to discuss the role of the examination agency in causing candidates’ poor performance.

Salman, Mohammed, Ogunlade and Ayinla (2012) in an article published in the Journal of Education and Practice, Volume 3, Number 8 on the causes of mass failure in senior school certificate Mathematics examinations as viewed by teachers and students in Ondo, Nigeria seek to investigate the contributions of Teachers, Students, Parents, Society, Government, School and Examination bodies in the mass failure in mathematics examinations in Nigeria. The Senior Secondary School teachers and students were involved as population for the study. 100 teachers and 400 Senior Secondary two students were purposively selected. The descriptive survey research was adopted for the study. The sampled teachers and students responded to researchers prepared questionnaire. The findings revealed that majority of the teachers and students supported the argument that students, teachers, parents, society, government, school and examination bodies were responsible for mass failure in NECO/WAEC Mathematics examinations. In fact, considering the role of Examination bodies, 86 out of 100 teachers (86%) and 262 out of 400 students (65.5%) agreed that leakage of examination questions contributed to students failure, and 88 out of 100 teachers (88%) and 264 out of 400 students (66%) agreed that the bribery and corruption on the part of supervisors also contributed to students mass failure in NECO/WAEC Mathematics Examinations. This study is important for the present study in that it investigates the causes of mass failure in examinations including the role of examination bodies. In spite of this connection this study ignores the validity arguments for these examinations and does not discuss the link with performance of candidates.

Research Methodology

The research design used for this study was the correlational research design because it sought to establish the relationship between two or more variables. The geo-political area where this research was carried out was the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon particularly in Bamenda, capital of the North West Region and Buea, capital of the South West Region. Cameroon has ten regions. The target population included the students and teachers who took part in the GCE organised examinations for the years under consideration while the sample population are all those students and teachers involved in the writing and evaluation of GCE History examinations for the years under consideration. It was from this sample that the sample of the population was drawn. In this study, random sampling techniques and the stratified techniques were used.

The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire for students and examiners. Two self-made questionnaires were constructed by the researcher for subject panel officials and to

candidates who sat for the 2017 GCE examinations with the help of the supervisor. The questionnaires were structured in such a way that the respondents choose a response from the options provided. For the officials, it was a 44 item questionnaire graded and weighted using the ten Likert scale as strongly Disagree (SD) with values 1 and 2, Somewhat Disagree (SWD) with values 3, 4 and 5, Somewhat Agree (SWA) with values 6, 7 and 8, and Strongly Agree (SA) with values 9 and 10 for subject panel officials and 15 item questionnaire for candidates.

These instruments once established were tested to ensure that they are valid and reliable. The researcher administered the questionnaire personally to the respondents, then went back and collected them on agreed dates. Not all the questionnaires were returned. 118 out of 306 questionnaires were returned from the candidates while 209 out of 313 questionnaires were collected from subject panel officials.

Validation of Instrument

Validity refers to how well a test measures what it is purported to measure. Validity encompasses the entire experimental concept and establishes whether the results obtained meet all the requirements of the scientific research method. Instruments are devised to measure what the researcher intends to measure and therefore he must ascertain the extent to which the instruments measure what they were designed to measure. Validity index would be calculated by administering the questionnaires to three experienced Assistant Chief Examiners who were to differentiate each item by accepting or rejecting depending on the fitting. For the three sets of questionnaires one calculated using the formulae below and each result added and divided by three. This produced a coefficient validity index (CVI) of 78.8%.

$CVI = \text{number of items accepted divided by total number of items.}$

Again, content validity was used to check the representation of the research questions in the questionnaires. The items found inadequate were discarded while some were modified. Secondly the researcher sought assistance from the supervisor in order to help improve content validity of the instrument.

Reliability of Data

Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and constant or consistent results. The idea behind reliability is that any significant results must be more than a one off finding and be inherently repeatable. Other researchers must be able to perform exactly the same experiment under the same conditions and generate the same results (Moskal et al, 2000). While

reliability is necessary, it alone is not sufficient. For a study or a test to be reliable it also needs to be valid (Moskal et al, 2000).

To determine the reliability of an instrument involves the computation of the correlation coefficient on two sets of scores obtained from the same group of people using a given instrument. This researcher also used SPSS 20 and the Alpha Cronbach to determine the internal consistency.

After pilot testing, the items were analyzed to ensure reliability using cronbach alpha as a measure of internal consistency. This will give a correlation coefficient 'r'. Amin (2005) states that a value of $r=0.7$ and above is a good indicator for the instrument to be used, while a value below 0.7 calls for revision of some items. The results indicated a value of 0.8 which was fairly good to progress with data collection.

Discussion of the Findings

The first objective was to find out the effects of the Cameroon GCE Board test construction practices on candidates' academic performance in O/L History. The research question derived from this objective was; to what extent does the test construction practices of the Cameroon GCE Board influence candidates' academic performance in O/L History? A null hypothesis was derived from this research question which states that the test construction practices of the Cameroon GCE Board do not significantly affect candidates' academic performances in Ordinary Level (OL) History. Based on the findings, the result of the study presented in tables 13 and 14 of chapter four revealed that, the test construction practices of the Cameroon GCE Board has a strong influence on candidates' academic performance and the null hypothesis was thus rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld. This led the researcher to conclude that the test construction practices of the GCE Board affect candidates' academic performance. These findings corroborate with the findings of Anyanwu, Onwuakpa and Williams (2015) who state that if public examination bodies fail to ensure that their test items are trial tested before life examinations, arranged in the increasing order of their difficulty indices in the body of every test, the development of a table of specification as well as the use of experts in test development in editing, vetting and composing test items into test forms before they are used, then the candidates performance can be affected negatively. Again, Olaidipupo (2015) also reveals that the absence of trial testing during test construction can affect in a negative way reliability and validity of examinations organised by the NECO and consequently the performance of candidates.

The second objective was to find out the relationship between the test administrations procedures of the GCE Board and the candidates' academic performance in O/L History. The research question derived from it was; to find out whether there is a relationship between test administration procedures of the examinations organised by the Cameroon GCE Board and candidates' academic performance in O/L History. A null hypothesis was derived from this research question which states that there is no significant relationship between the test administration procedures of the GCE Board and candidates' academic performances in Ordinary Level (OL) History. Based on the findings, the result of the study presented in tables 15 and 16 of chapter four revealed that, there is a relationship between the test construction practices of the Cameroon GCE Board and candidates' academic performance and therefore, the null hypothesis was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis maintained. Therefore, these findings revealed that the respondents believe that the test administration procedures of the Cameroon GCE Board have a significant relationship with candidates' academic performance. This means that the way examinations are run by the Board influence Candidates' academic performance positively or negatively. These findings are in line with those of Areghan, Agwu and Aidokhai (2012) in article on test administration procedures of public examinations in Nigeria and their implications in WASSCE. The article discusses the distortion during the administration of WASSCE and its eminent consequences on candidates' performance and discusses pragmatic strategies to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its processes for test administration. To Areghan et al (2012), large candidature, inadequate facilities and insufficient manpower have implications on the validity of assessment outcomes and this is similar to this present findings. Another study by Mkpae (2008) concludes that despite the great achievements of the West African Examination council (WAEC) in the conduct of SSCE, it has been bedevilled by examination malpractices affecting the validity and reliability of the examinations and that these malpractices mostly during test administration affect performance in many dimensions.

The third and last research objective was to find out the extent to which the evaluation or scoring practices of the examinations organised by the Cameroon GCE Board predict candidates' academic performance in O/L History. The research question derived from this objective was; to what extent do the evaluation of GCE examinations organised by the GCE Board predict candidates' academic performance in O/L History? An alternative hypothesis was derived from this question which states that the evaluation of examinations organised by the Cameroon GCE Board significantly predict candidates' academic performance in O/L History. Based on the

findings, the result of the study presented in tables 17 of chapter four revealed that the evaluation process of the GCE examinations do not predict candidates' academic performance in O/L History and the alternative hypothesis was thus rejected and the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that most respondents are of the opinion that the evaluation or scoring practices of the Board do not predict candidates' academic performance in any way. The evaluation exercise is carried out by examiners who are teachers invited by the Board each end of year. Only the views of the subject panel officials were sampled. These findings might have been so because of the fact that the Board invites only teachers with cognate experience to mark the examinations, the methodical drilling of examiners prior to the marking exercise and the fact that examiners are constantly consulting each other and even subject panel hierarchy in case of doubt amongst others. These findings also corroborate with those of Cheung, Amy and Chang (2009) who investigated the reliability and validity in rating scripts by assistant examiners and concluded that all efforts must be made by examining agencies to monitor marking quality, the absence of which can affect performance of candidates. Again Hudson and Graham (2009) in a paper on improving marking quality in essays, conclude that scanning technology, marking algorithms and adaptable sampling criteria should be used to provide a dynamic approach to monitor marking variances between individual markers. To them if these variances are not checked, candidates will pass and some will fail mistakenly because of the insufficiencies of markers therefore affecting candidates' academic performance.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to determine whether there is validity evidence of the Cameroon GCE Board examinations and by this find out whether the Board's test development procedures predict Candidates' academic performance in one way or the other. The study found out that there is validity evidence to support the GCE Board examinations. But it further revealed that in spite of this fact, the test construction and test administration procedures of the Cameroon GCE Board affect in some significant way candidates' academic performance. This means that some candidates succeed or fail because of some errors in the Board's test construction and administration procedures. On the other hand the study revealed that the marking of the examinations organised by the Board by examiners do not significantly predict candidates' academic performance. Therefore, the Cameroon GCE Board while strengthening its evaluation practices should work relentlessly on improving its test construction and test administration practices. The Board should ensure that the examination they organise must be valid and reliable,

such that candidates that study should pass not because of some extraneous variable caused by the Board itself.

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