

A Critical Analysis of the Effectiveness of Examination Policy on Examination Administration in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study analyses the effectiveness of examination policy in evaluation of educational goals, programs and project. It also analysis the short term effects in achieving and maintenance of high level of integrity, efficiency and honesty in the conduct and administration of examination. It likewise looks at the impact of the policy through step by step analysis of the process of setting examinations questions, selections of questions, moderating of the examination, printing of question papers, packaging of question papers, storage of question papers, dispersing of question papers from council headquarters, storage at designated distribution centres, dispersal to examination centres, examination time, packing of answer scripts, return the examination scripts to the council, marking of scripts, processing of results and final release of the results. An expert oriented evaluation model which depends on professional expertise to judge the educational programs is used. The model allows the evaluator to examine objectives and goals and identify the areas of failures and success. Critical analysis of examination policy research rendered itself to qualitative research methodology because the researchers analysed the policy and procedures as applied in the conduct and administration of examination. The researchers endeavored to interrogate the policy to find out its effectiveness in achieving the core values of high level of efficiency, honesty, and integrity and the goals of education. The methodology engaged a multidimensional focus involving an examination, interpretation and naturalist (Denzin and Lincon, 1994) approach to the policy. The researchers focused on examination reports, document analysis and the laid down procedures of handling the examination papers. It was found that there are many levels and loopholes through which the examination leakages, cheating and malpractice occur which defeat the purpose of examination as an evaluation tool. The conclusion is that the examination policy does not adequately address the conduct and administration of national examination. There is therefore need to revise the policy to address the loopholes in examination administration and conduct since as of now it is insensitive inadequate.

Keywords: National Examination, policy, conduct, administration, summative evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The vision 2030 for creation of globally competitive and prosperous nation with high quality life and transformation of Kenya into newly industrialised middle income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens will remain a mirage if the current trend within the examination circles will persist. Education worldwide aims to educate individuals within the society, to prepare and qualify them for work in the economy as well as to integrate them into the society (UNESCO, 2000). Education has another aspect of providing a forum for scholar, economists, traders and many other people to meet and evaluate their problems in their fields and in society in general for the purpose of developing solutions. According to Education for All (EFA), 'true' education is a passport to human development and among its goals is to

improve quality of education and produce citizens with skills, knowledge and expertise and personal qualities that are required to support a growing economy. This is supported in the millennium goals which aim at achieving quality and relevant universal education.

The dreams of the vision 2030 to have children who are well educated by well trained teachers who will help them realise their potential will remain just a dream well dreamt. The dreams of the vision that forecasts an education that will provide globally competitive quality education, training and research in Kenya and aims to be a regional centre of research and development in new technology may not be realised. The dreams of the vision that aims at the overall goal to reduce illiteracy by access to education, providing transition rate from primary to secondary and raising the quality and relevance of education may never be witnessed because the Kenyan evaluation environment has become extremely challenging and self-defeating. The evaluation aspect in all disciplines is extremely important in raising productivity, creativity and technological advancement if only it is impartial, objective and well-focused because it a major tool in decision making.

The main aim of evaluation in education is to systematically and objectively determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of teaching- learning activities. It is process of judging value on what has been achieved particularly in relation to activities planned and overall objective. Evaluation achieves its purpose if it accurately attributes changes to intervention. It must determine the relevance, fulfilment of objectives, development, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability for it to qualify to be objective evaluation and useful. Evaluation has wide relevance to decision making, resource allocation, accountability, systematic collection of information regarding the nature and quality of educational research, the merit and demerit of programs and projects regarding education.

It is only through an objective evaluation that judgments can be made on whether the 2030 vision and the goals of education are being realised. Through the evaluation of learners quality and relevance of education can be ascertained. Educational evaluation of students in Kenya conforms to two approaches. Unlike the formative evaluation which is continuous and done internally in schools, summative evaluation carries more gravity and relevance and is done Kenyan wide. It has more emphasis in Kenyan education system and used for certification. Summative evaluation is done throughout Kenya by means of a national examinations conducted by Kenya National Examinations Council. The national examinations have advantage of giving the national view of how curriculum has been implemented throughout the country and the type of labour Kenya expects. The examinations therefore play a duo role of anticipation and interrogation.

Despite the interrogatory role of the examination (Paul,1976), that is, to find out whether the learners have acquired adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes required at a given level, summative examinations carried out in Kenya have discriminatory and separatory effects which have far reaching consequences on learners lives. The separatory effects are the effects of separating children who have lived together for an entire period in pre- primary, primary school, bonded and had learnt to assist each other in almost all aspects of life. These children separate and forget each other for the balance of common life. This happens when children are admitted in form one at different secondary schools of which research has shown that students joining form one take over one year to settle or become comfortable (Child mistreatment, 2011). The discriminatory effects are the effects where the students who scored high marks are placed in well-endowed prestigious national schools and extra county schools while those scoring low marks suffer the harsh consequences of joining the poorly endowed day schools. The same scenario trickles down to teachers, where despite the same training teachers undergo in colleges and universities, those teachers teaching in well performing

schools are rewarded with promotions, deployment in prestigious boarding schools which enjoy other associated benefits. Due to the above effects, intense competition has developed among the students and teachers which have degenerated to decay in integrity, dishonesty and lack of professionalism within the teaching fraternity. Examination plays a role of categorization criterion for individuals in the society and allocation of resources in schools (Sifuna, 2008) and therefore for categorization to be fair, examination administration must be conducted with integrity, honesty and fairness.

The Kenya national examinations council has the sole mandate to implement examination policy. It has the mandate to conduct academic, technical and other examinations within the boundaries of Kenya in both basic and tertiary levels. Its core values is the maintenance of high level of efficiency, integrity and honesty by all council employees and the contracted professionals in the conduct of examinations. Although there are tough rules and regulations governing examinations administrations and harsh punishments associated with dishonesty, cases of malpractices have escalated into frightening proportions. The cases that are reported are just the tip of an iceberg. The mode of cheating has evolved over time from simple cheating of students by peeping at the other students work to technologically more advanced organised system of “grade cleaning” by school principals in collusion with examination officials. In grade cleaning, schools part with hundreds of thousands of shilling to “clean the grades” and the amount depends on the degree of cleanliness the principal prefers. The net effect is the unfair categorization and discrimination of students and total defeat of the aims, purpose and objects of evaluation and heavy monetary losses by the schools. The corruption has been accelerated by the glorification of results and ranking of schools which has reduced learning into rote memorization and teaching of examination instead of content.

The Kenya national examination council has a number of regulations including the abortive legislation on the conduct and administration of national examinations including the banning of mobile phones in the examination rooms, revising the examination timetable which saw the scrapping of examinations in the afternoons (KNEC, 2008), but with the fast evolution of cheating, it has been an effort in futility.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Due to discriminatory effect of examinations on individual students, the effect of the allocation of resources, attainment of educational goal and the categorization of individuals in the society, examination policies must guarantee fairness in all students taking examinations. The policies must ensure that there are no cases of cheating, irregularities and malpractices in conduct and administration of examinations. However, according to the ministry of education (2010), cases of cheating and irregularities had been reported in the past but, by the year 2008, the crescendo of cheating and examination leakages had reached fever pitch. It is on this basis the researchers analysed the examination policy to ascertain its adequacy and effectiveness in the conduct and administration of the national examinations.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

National examinations play a key role in both personal and collective life. They play a key role in evaluating whether or not the education goals are being achieved. In order to guarantee equity in resource allocation, fair competition for scarce opportunities and to ensure acquisition of adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes for national development and to avoid placing candidates at an unfair advantage or disadvantage (Afolabi, 1998) the examinations must be devoid of malpractices. However, the many cases of cheating and malpractices being reported, for example, in 2009, one thousand, one hundred and seventy one cases of cheating were reported, in the preceding year 2007, some more one thousand,

eight hundred and seventy five cases were reported. This indicates that the examination policy may be inadequate or non- functional. It is against this background that the researchers questioned the effectiveness of the examination policy and therefore the purpose of the research was critically analyse the effectiveness of the examination policy in conduct and administration of national examinations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. To critically analyse the policy guidelines applied during setting and moderation of national examinations.
2. To critically examine the policy rules applied during typesetting, proof reading and packaging of the national examination papers.
3. To critically examine the process of release of papers from the storage, transportation to collection centres and to examination centres.
4. To investigate the strictness of application of the examination regulations from opening of examination papers to packing of answer scripts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the policy guidelines applied during setting and moderation of national examinations?
2. What are the policy rules applied during typesetting, proof reading and packaging of the national examination papers?
3. What process is followed from the release of papers from the storage, transportation to collection centres and to examination centres?
4. What are the examination regulations applicable from opening of examination papers to packaging of answer scripts?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A critical analysis of examination policy used qualitative research methodology. The research rendered itself to qualitative research methodology because the researchers analysed the policy and procedures as applied in the conduct and administration of examination. The researchers endeavoured to interrogate the policy to find out whether it is effective in achieving the core values high level of efficiency, honesty, and integrity and the goals of education. The methodology engaged a multidimensional focus involving an examination, interpretation and naturalist (Denzin and Lincon, 1994) approach to the policy. The researchers focused on examination reports, document analysis and the laid down procedures of handling the examination papers. The research rendered itself to non-interactive design which according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2002) there was typically no engagement with the participants.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Policy Guidelines Applied During Setting and Moderation of National Examinations

Evaluation is universally accepted as an integral part of teaching and learning process. It is the basic component of any curriculum and plays a pivotal role in determining what learners have learnt (Nevo, 1995) and a powerful means of improving quality of education (2002). Formal testing in national examinations provides the baseline information for decision

makers in nature and quality of education provided identification of important educational problems in schools in order to provide solution and also forms comparative flat form for learners and schools. The examination leakages, cheating, irregularities and other form of malpractices militate against judicious judgments and subsequent solutions because in most cases they are solutions to non-existing problems. The comparative aspect of schools, the discriminatory and categorization effects have the residual effects of intense competition that snow balls to high levels of cheating, corruption by school principals and examination officials, irregularities and malpractices.

The examination role is no longer meant for evaluation of success (or lack of it) of instructional programmes in achievement of educational goals but for competition and glorification of results and schools. The first level of leakages of the examination occurs during setting of questions, moderation of the examination questions and packing. According to the chairman of Kenya secondary school heads association, examination cheating is not a one day affairs (Awiti, 2013) but it is normally spread throughout the year. Kenya National Examinations Council contracts the same people to set examination every year. These teachers are well known within the education fraternity. They eventually become conduit of the examinations questions. Although KNEC has set rules and regulations to counter that, lack of professionalism and integrity among the contracted personnel and examination officials militate against them and this puts students at unfair competition.

Policy Rules Applied During Typesetting, Proof Reading and Packaging of the National Examination Papers

The second level of examination leakages and malpractice occurs during type setting, proof reading and packaging. It therefore means that the leakages occur long before the examination starts. This involves examination officials within the Kenya National Examinations Council Headquarters at Mutihani house during packaging. At this stage a script or a copy finds its way out of Mutihani house. The papers for different subjects are then distributed across the country at exorbitant prices. These papers are authentic and parents and students spend a lot of money to access the papers beforehand. In the year 2008, one TV station showed the mathematics paper two examinations on their 9.00 pm news bulletin, a day before the examination was done.

An interrogation with Kenya National Examinations Council chief executive revealed that there were some corrupt examination officials among the council staff who may be accomplices to examination leakages. However, an attempt by Kenya anti-corruption commission to audit the council was resisted blatantly despite the escalating cases of leakages and irregularities that were being reported. There had been wide spread cheating in the examinations since year 2008 as indicated on table one.

Table1. Cases of Cheating Since 2007

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Candidates Caught Cheating</i>
2010	534
2009	1171
2008	1419
2007	1875

KNEC annual report 2007-2010

The table shows just a few cases recorded otherwise most of the cases go unreported. The national examinations have been compromised due to widespread cheating with the collusion of KNEC officials, police officers, business people, school principals, private school owners and examination supervisors. Examination malpractices have become sophisticated and institutionalised (Kithuka & Musau, 2007). The intractable nature of cheating and malpractice has resulted to ugly scenes of graduates without knowledge and skills. Students read to pass examination and not to acquire knowledge and skills. Due to the value attached to the certificates, any means can be applied to acquire a certificate with good grades. That explains why cheating has graduated from simple peeping at the neighbours work, to using key point notes or text books or copying on the sheets of papers referred to “microchips” to copying on the desks also referred to as desktop publishing to more advanced and organised method of question paper buying from examination bodies or bank officials entrusted in safe-keeping of examination papers.

The highest level of cheating involves senior examination officials and school headteachers or school principals. In this case principals of schools corrupt to have their grades “cleaned”. This is where the poor grades are replaced with good grades of the candidates who have performed poorly in order to raise the mean score. The Kenya National Examinations Council has become a cash cow for corrupt officials. At packaging stage, a few papers find their way into the circulation where they are sold at a later date at high prices. This erodes the core value of high level of integrity and honesty on which the examinations council is founded.

Release of Papers from the Storage, Transportation to Collection Centres and to Examination Centres

The Government has endeavoured to minimise the risk of malpractice at this level in a number of ways. The examination papers are collected from KNEC headquarters two days or a day before the date of the examination in an attempt to reduce the risk of leakage (KNEC, 2008). Moreover, the time table was revised that saw the scrapping of examination in the afternoons. Additional vehicles and security personnel are dispatched to support the administration of examination. But even with these measures, cheating occurs during that examination day. Once the examination papers stored at the district commissioners offices or local police armoury are released at 0600hours to the supervisors for dispersal to the examination centres collusion occurs between the corrupt supervisors with the head teachers and examination officials.

The head teachers use their own vehicles despite the rule to use the secured vehicle provided by the council for fast ferrying of the examination to the examination centres. The examinations is opened even an hour before time, the paper is reproduced and given to students for quick perusal. By the time the examination starts at few minutes past 8.00 because in most cases it starts late, the students have already interacted with the examination papers. The reproduced papers are then corrected and completely destroyed. The papers that are done at a later time are also opened before time and the same is done. There are times when the teachers even revise the real examination with students. This is the third instant, collusion between the supervisor, the head teacher and the student. The students and the teachers discuss the questions before the examination starts.

Strictness of Application of the Examination Regulations from Opening of Examination Papers to Packing of Answer Scripts

During the examination period and before the examination starts, the examination officials hold seminars with head teachers and supervisors. They are briefed before the examination starts on council expectations and provided with supervisors manual. The Kenya National

Examinations Council introduced the time limit between the time examination starts that is opening of examination scripts and enclosing in the return envelopes. The procedure of opening the scripts is that the head teacher in presence of students and supervisors sign the certificate to indicate that the scripts were not opened. The students, the invigilators and supervisors too sign to certify the same before the examination is distributed. The regulation requires that any papers not being done should be kept in front of the students. The timetable was revised to shift the afternoon examinations to morning to minimise the time the examination stays in the examination centre. However, in circumstances where cheating is witnessed, conspiracy between the students, the head teacher, supervisors and education officials is organised during the recruitment of supervisors so that specific teachers supervise certain examination centres. The common practice in most of the centres is that teachers who have invigilated and supervised before are repeated. Although this has an advantage of experience, it has a major setback in circumstances of examination cheating and leakages. These are the supervisors and invigilators who collude with students and head teachers to cheat. In some circumstances, the students pay money to facilitate the cheating.

The third level of cheating occurs during the examination day where the examination is opened quite early in the morning and students are given the script to go through before they sit for the examination. Sometimes they revise with the teacher or they are allowed to move freely in and out of the examination rooms to interact with the text books outside. This occurs when the supervisors and invigilators are compromised.

The last level of malpractice occurs after the examinations have been marked, standardized and graded. It involves school principals and examination officials at Mutihani house. The mean grades of schools are communicated to principals or the principals closely follow up the results. At this level, money in terms of hundreds of thousands exchange hands in order to eliminate the poor grades and improve the mean score. The examinations are no longer serving the purpose of evaluation but are serving the purpose of glorifying schools and school principals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In order to remedy the above, the researchers recommend that a radical change that will see an overhaul of the Kenya National Examinations Council be done to break the cartels involved in examination selling and redeployment of new staff. This will close the avenues of the examination selling.
2. An examination bank needs to be made, where many questions are set, moderated and then stored. The setting of questions and moderation should not be done by the same teachers. The council needs to have many teachers being in serviced on examination setting and moderation and who are picked at random to set and moderate questions that are kept in the examination bank.
3. The in-service training should be an annual event. During the year the banked questions are forwarded to the printing company which selects the questions.
4. Typesetting, proof reading and packaging should be subcontracted to a foreign company where the examination is kept up to three weeks before the date of examination. The practical subjects confidential can be released earlier. The short time will greatly reduce the high probability of examination leakages.
5. Printing and packing should be done outside the country to avoid leakages resulting from the process.

6. In recruitment of invigilators, the council should recruit people of high integrity especially senior teacher who cannot be easily compromised. In practice, recruitment is done by District Education Office in conjunction with the Head teachers. The Head teacher release those teacher who are incompetent and those that are in most cases at loggerheads with or those who are very young in the profession and easily be compromised. Most head teachers are would like to have the above scenario because they are accomplice to the cheating due to the glory given to the results in Kenya. On this we recommend that the supervisors and invigorators have the minimum qualification of a senior teacher and of high integrity. Unregistered teachers, teachers employed by Board of Management should not be allowed to do any invigilation whatever. Invigilators and supervisors should not be allowed to invigilate or supervise same examination centre for more than two years.
7. During examination period, there should be regular and frequent inspection of examination centres by examination officials. These too must be people of integrity. Monitoring should be done on daily basis. In practice, those officials on routine inspection do inform the supervisor the station they are visiting and most the examination centres have never seen them. On the above we recommend regular inspection and monitoring on daily basis of all the examination centres and the inspectors should only identify themselves only when they get into the examination centre.
8. The last level cheating is as a result of compromise among the top officials in schools management and top officials in Kenya National Examinations Council, The Chief Executive of the council, the researchers recommend vetting by parliament and the same must meet the requirement of Chapter Six of the Constitution.
9. Most of the promotions of Teachers Service Commission to administrative posts are not on merit. In the past, the practice has been and still is that, those teachers who spend less time in classroom but spend more time mingling with Education officials find their way to headships. The promotions to headship are not meritorious but are riddled with corruption, and ethnicity and the interests of the sponsoring church. This explains why most principals are heading their village schools and why the principal will go out of his way even to pay large sums of money to clean the grades. The people who bribe to headships are same people bribe to survive in those positions by propagating the vice. The researchers therefore recommend that headship in schools be competitive based on qualification and fulfilment of Chapter Six of the Constitution. Vetting should be done by county panels and posting be to school be randomised. The researchers therefore recommend that headship to school be on contractual basis for a period of four years, renewable for another one term but in a different school for those who perform extremely well with prudent management and free of corruption. This will eliminate the issue of students being forced to repeat for the purposes of raising the mean grade and ideas of buying the examinations to protect the position.

CONCLUSIONS

Evaluation in education isa process of judging value on what education has achieved particularly in relation to activities planned and overall objectives. It is meant to improve educational activities and promote better planning for future action and designed specifically with intention to attribute changes in performance to interventions. Evaluation answers the question, “what have we achieved and what impact have we made”. The researchers found out that the Kenya national examinations do not conclusively evaluate educational

achievements due cheating, leakages and malpractices that occur during examination time.

The vices occur and recur due to discriminatory effects the examination results have on both students and teachers especially on resource allocation. Although the aim of evaluation is to determine the relevance of education, fulfillment of objectives, merits and demerits of interventions, correct information will never be got and accurate decisions will never see the light of the day. It is therefore logical to conclude that, in the past, resources have been misallocated and priorities misplaced and therefore the examination policies need to be reviewed to address the goals of education of acquisition of knowledge, skill and attitudes for national development.

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