



# Management Practices for Curbing Secondary School Students' Apathy to In-School External Examinations in Anambra State

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## Abstract

*The study investigated the management practices for curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 512 respondents made up of principals and in-school examination officers in all public secondary schools in Anambra State. The entire population was studied because it is relatively small and manageable. An instrument titled "Management Strategies for Curbing Students' Apathy to In-School External Examinations Questionnaire (MSCSAIEEQ)" was used for data collection. The face validation was determined by three experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, two specialists in Educational Management and a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation all in the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus. Cronbach alpha (α) method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded coefficients of 0.85 and 0.83 for Clusters A and B with an overall value of 0.84. Data collected were analyzed using mean ratings to answer the research questions, while hypotheses were tested using t-test. The findings of the study revealed among others educational policies and administrative practices are effective and significantly helpful in curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government should endeavour to review and modify its' policy documents on educational administration to address policies that would help in deterring students in engaging from in-school external examinations in Anambra State.*

**Keywords:** Management Practices, Curbing, Apathy, In-school, External Examination, Educational Policies, Administrative Practices

## 1. Introduction

In recent times, students of secondary schools in Anambra State had continued to shun external examinations arranged in their schools. Reports continued to reveal the account of students' apathy to in-school external examinations in favour of special centres (Omorie, 2005; Chiegbok, 2005). Such examinations are the West African Examination Council (WAEC), Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (SSCE) and the National Examination Council (NECO). These examinations are external examinations through which students graduate from secondary schools and enter higher institutions or the world of work. Iwuji (2007) described these examinations as yardsticks for assessing what students learnt as a result of going through secondary education and as a predictor of their success in higher education or the world of life. This implied that in the situation where students do not take these examinations in their schools, it becomes difficult to assess the quality of outputs of secondary schools as well as determine the



cost-effectiveness of educational investments in schools. As Okpofibre (2005) pointed out that students' apathy for in-school external examination is a monster that must be tamed at all costs before it destroys the objectives of secondary school entirely.

According to the New Chambers Dictionary (2000), apathy is indifference, or lack of interest. Apathy to in-school external examinations is a situation where enrolled students of a school are not interested and fail to register for external examinations in their school. Omoregie (2005) described apathy to in-school external examinations as an irregular trend in students' enrolment for external examinations taken in their schools. In the context of the study, apathy to in-school external examinations described a situation where many registered students of secondary schools do not enroll for and sit for SSCE examinations in their schools. It is not that these students dropped out of school, or did not sit for these examinations at all, but they preferred to take them in private secondary schools or in "Miracle Centres" outside their schools. This apathy applies to both male and female secondary school students, be they in boys, girls or co-educational schools.

This trend implies that the aims and objectives of secondary education are being seriously threatened. In some cases, intimidation of principals, teachers, parents and even the students who refuse to join in the "outside WAEC" syndrome as it is popularly called, results in some students that have enrolled for this "outside WAEC" stay in their schools and constitute nuisances to school authorities. As Omoregie (2005) pointed out that they destroyed school properties at the slightest provocation, broke into principals' offices to forge school leaving testimonials, broke into bursars' offices to steal money to pay for these exorbitant examinations. These activities consequently disrupt students' personnel administration and effective educational planning as data for secondary school output continued to be unstable. Society as a whole suffers from this menace. Disruptions in the foundations for national manpower training, production of certified illiterates, cultism in higher institutions, examination malpractice, students' indiscipline, wastages in educational investments and staff collaboration in examination malpractices are obvious results. Even worse, the lives of these students are endangered as they travel far and wide to sit for these examinations.

Given these realities, the management of secondary schools is under pressure to take several measures or apply some practices to eradicate students' apathy to in-school external examinations. The Federal Government had earlier promulgated decree 20, which would enhance the trial's productive activity. Okeke-Ezeanyanwu (2021) defined practices as the procedures and methods of attaining a goal. Management practices, therefore, referred to approaches, measures or integrated plans through which managers accomplish their objectives. In this research, management practices are the approaches, measures or actions that managers of education take in curbing students' apathy to in-school external examinations. These practices investigated in this study are educational policies and administrative practices.

Educational policy is rules, procedures guidelines and standards for actions and activities in the learning institution. According to Nzeako (2016), educational policy consists of a system of administrative guidelines, rules and regulations put in place to direct members of staff towards the achievement of the national goals of education. It is the rules that govern the operation of a learning institution. Educational policies are the principles and government policy-making in the educational sphere, as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of the



education system (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Uzoigwe (2007) noted that for a very long time the West African Examinations Council was a lone voice in the fight against examination fraud in Nigeria. Uzoigwe (2007) further stated that the situation has however, shown tremendous improvement as Government (States and Federal) and other stakeholders had not expressed concern over the problem but had indeed taken a laudable step to further the fight against it by proffering various policies such as the creation of the post examination council, increased funding, use of ICT in examination. Issues in education policy also address problems with in-school external examinations.

Administrative practices are techniques and methods adopted for managing an organization. The management practices are meant to establish efficiency, consistency, responsibility and accountability. According to Igoni (2020), administrative practices are functions and activities mapped out toward motivating and controlling members of staff to attain set objectives. Rosef (2012) noted that administrative practices for curbing in-school external examinations involve the process of setting standards, knowing what outcome is expected, and making sure that the outcome is properly realized.

The researchers sought the practices adopted by educational managers in curbing students' apathy to in-school examinations because as it stands now, this menace is threatening the validity of secondary education. The validity of secondary education in the nation's educational system could be so vital that it needed qualitative management to ensure effective management. This sector of the nation's educational system is the performance of students. Secondary education is aimed at preparing the youth for useful living and admission into higher education. Undoubtedly, these functions are very essential for the survival, enhancement and development of the Nigerian society. However, the extent to which secondary education achieves the roles expected of it is largely dependent on the management practices put in place to enhance students' learning positively. It becomes necessary then to empirically determine the practices which the management of secondary schools in Anambra State adopt to curb students' apathy to in-school examinations.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The consequences of students' apathy to in-school external examination in secondary schools in Anambra State are becoming very severe, thereby posing a foremost threat to educational development in the state. For instance, a report by Youths for Popular Participation and Advancement, on the just concluded WAEC and NECO examinations in Anambra State revealed that in five big secondary schools visited in Onitsha Education Zone, 28% of the total students in public school failed to enroll in these examinations in their schools.

This report showed that students' apathy to in-school external examinations is even more than speculated by members of the public. This menace that is breeding in secondary schools in Nigeria in general and Anambra State, in particular, is an educational problem that affects the nation's development. It reduces the quality of manpower development of the state, fractures social and physical infrastructures, and shreds the fabrics of economic and technological development. Thus, it demands the adoption of effective management practices to redress the problem. It is likely that if this situation is not effectively controlled, more students would join in the "Outside WAEC" syndrome, thus distorting the values and gains of secondary education.



The problem of this study is to determine the practices that the management of secondary education might adopt in combating the menace.

### **1.2 Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the management practices for curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The effectiveness of educational policies in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.
2. The effectiveness of administrative practices in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How effective are educational policies in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State?
2. How effective are administrative practices in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State?

### **1.4 Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Educational policies would not significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.
2. Administrative practices would not significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

## **2. Method**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), the descriptive survey is a design that aims at collecting data to describe the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design is deemed appropriate for the study since the researcher collected data from the given population of the study to determine the management practices for curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations in Anambra State. The study was conducted in Anambra State which is located in the south-east, Nigeria. The study covered all the secondary schools managed by the state government in the state which is divided into six education zones which include: Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otucha.

The population of the study comprised 512 respondents which include all the principals and in-school examination officers in all public secondary schools in Anambra State. The entire population of 512 respondents was used without sampling because the size is relatively small and manageable by the researchers. The decision to study the entire population is in line with the



recommendation of Laerd (2012) who stated that a researcher can choose to study the entire population when the size is small.

An instrument titled 'Management Strategies for Curbing Students' Apathy to In-School External Examinations Questionnaire (MSCSAIEEQ)' was used for data collection. The instrument was divided into Parts A and B. Part B solicited information on the qualification, years of experience and gender. Part B is divided into Clusters A and B. Cluster A which focused on educational policies contained 10 items and Cluster B which centred on administrative practice had 9 items. The instrument contained 19 items structured on a four-point rating scale of Highly Effective (HE), Effective (E), Low Effective (LE) and Not Effective (NE); which were weighted 4,3,2,1 respectively.

The instrument was subjected to face validation. To ascertain this, the researchers presented the title, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses and the copies of the instrument to three experts, two specialists in Educational Management and a specialist in Measurement and Evaluation all in the Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam campus. The experts were requested to review the appropriateness of the language structure and expressions. These experts, after scrutinizing the instrument, made very important and useful suggestions and corrections, which were reflected in the final modification of the items of the questionnaire.

Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the sections of the instruments. According to Gay (2010), this technique estimates reliability by determining how homogenous the items in the questionnaire are especially when the items are worth a different number of points. In testing for reliability, therefore, copies of the questionnaire were administered to a sample of 15 principals and 10 external examination officers from public secondary schools in Enugu State. The data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach alpha which yielded coefficients of 0.85 and 0.83 for Clusters A and B with an overall value of 0.84.

The researchers together with three trained research assistants who are secondary school teachers in the state collected data for the study. The copies of questionnaire that were properly filled and successfully retrieved were subjected to analysis. Data analysis was done using mean ratings to answer the research questions and t-test to test the hypotheses. The decision on the research questions was based on the principle of real limits of mean, thus, Highly Effective (HE) 3.50-4.00; Effective (E) 2.50-3.49; Low Effective (LE) 1.50-2.49 and Not Effective (NE) 1.00-1.49. The decision rule is that a null hypothesis was accepted when the calculated-t is less than the critical-t at 0.05 level of significance but when the calculated-t exceeded the critical-t, the null hypotheses were rejected.

### 3. Results

**Research Question 1:** How effective are educational policies in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Effectiveness of Educational Policies in Curbing Apathy to In-School External Examinations among Students

S/N	The formulation of these policies will help in students' curbing apathy to in-school external examinations		
		Mean	Decision
1	Banning of private schools from enrolling students for SSCE	1.97	Lowly Effective
2	Enforcing strict adherence to the policy stipulated in the 6-3-3-4 system	3.71	Highly Effective
3	Banning students from transferring from one school to another after SS 1	2.56	Effective
4	Students' registration for SSCE in school order than their original schools need to be prohibited	1.21	Not Effective
5	Schools enrolling students for SSCE should submit copies of students' cumulative results for SS 1 and 2	3.51	Highly Effective
6	The massive transfer of students from urban to rural schools should be stopped as these rural schools are used as miracle centres	3.02	Effective
7	There should be a laid down strict criteria for approving private schools to register students for SSCE	3.59	Highly Effective
8	Using open door policy to welcome pieces of advice and contributions on improving students' registration for external examination	3.54	Highly Effective
9	Banning of all "miracle centres"	3.15	Effective
10	Upon promotion to SS II, parents and students should sign letters of undertakings against apathy to in-school examination	3.57	Highly Effective
<b>Mean of Means</b>		<b>2.98</b>	<b>Effective</b>

The result of the data analysis in Table 1 above revealed the use of educational policies in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State. From the results, item 4 with the mean rating of 1.21 is not effective, while item 1 with the mean rating of 1.97 is lowly effective. Items 3, 6 and 9 with mean ratings of 2.56, 3.02 and 3.15 are effective, while items 2, 5, 7, 8 and 10 with mean ratings of 3.71, 3.51, 3.59, 3.54 and 3.57 are highly effective as educational policies to curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State. The mean of means of 2.98 indicated that educational policies are effective in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Research Question 2:** How effective are administrative practices in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Analysis of Effectiveness of Administrative Practices in Curbing Apathy to In-School External Examinations among Students

S/N	The following administrative practices should be adopted for curbing apathy to in-school external examinations		
		Mean	Decision
11	Teachers' welfare should be improved to make them more committed to facilitating effective learning and discipline among students	2.54	Effective
12	Needed facilities and equipment should be provided for effective learning in schools	3.56	Highly Effective
13	Effective supervision and monitoring of schools should be intensified	3.57	Highly Effective
14	Appropriate records of students' enrolment, cumulative performances and withdrawal should be kept to help to track down students that do not register for SSCE in their schools	3.41	Effective
15	Examination ethics and values should be incorporated into the morning assembly manuals of schools	1.54	Lowly Effective
16	Educational managers to facilitate inputs toward curbing all forms of examination malpractices should adopt participative management behaviour	3.53	Highly Effective
17	Efforts should be targeted at using research data in educational planning to help in forecasting and tracking irregular trends in terminal examinations	3.29	Effective
18	Every school should organize extramural classes to steer students' interest away from miracle centres	3.11	Effective
19	Issues in students' engagement with "Outside" WAEC should always be discussed during PTA meetings	3.49	Effective
<b>Mean of Means</b>		<b>3.12</b>	<b>Effective</b>

The result of the data analysis in Table 2 above revealed the use of administrative practices in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State. From the results, item 15 with the mean rating of 1.54 is not effective, while items 11, 14, 17, 18 and 19 with the mean ratings of 2.54, 3.41, 3.29, 3.11 and 3.49 respectively are effective. On the other hand, items 15, 13 and 16 with mean ratings of 3.56, 3.57 and 3.53 are highly effective as administrative practices to curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State. The mean of means of 3.12 indicated that administrative practices are effective in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Hypothesis 1:** Educational policies would not significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Table 3: The summary of t-test of Analysis of Effectiveness of Educational policies in curbing Apathy to in-school External Examinations among Secondary School Students**

Option	N	X	Df	t.cal	t.crit.	Remark
Effectiveness of Educational Policies	512	28.8	510	7.34	1.96	Not Significant

The result in Table 3 indicated that the calculated t-value of 7.34 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at the stipulated 0.05 level of significance and 510 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It therefore means that educational policies would significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Hypothesis 2:** Administrative practices would not significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

**Table 4: The summary of t-test of Analysis of Effectiveness of Administrative Practices in curbing Apathy to in-school External Examinations among Secondary School Students**

Option	N	X	Df	t.cal	t.crit.	Remark
Effectiveness of Administrative Practices	512	28.04	510	5.51	1.96	Not Significant

The result in Table 4 indicated that the calculated t-value of 5.51 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at the stipulated 0.05 level of significance and 510 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It therefore means that administrative practices would significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

#### 4. Discussion

The finding of the study indicated that educational policies are effective in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State. The significant role of educational policies in curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations is justified by the respondents' agreement to, enforcing strict adherence to the policy stipulated in the 6-3-34 system, banning students from transferring from one school to the other after SS 1, schools enrolling students for SSCE should submit copies of students' cumulative results for SS 1 and 2, the massive transfer of students from urban to rural schools should be stopped to discourage the use of these rural schools as miracle centres, there should be laid strict criteria for approving private schools to register students' for SSCE, using open-door policy to welcome pieces of advice and contributions on improving students' registration for external examinations, banning of all miracle centres, and upon promotion to SS II, parents and students should sign letters of undertakings against apathy to in-school examination. The finding is in line with Omoregie (2005) who stated that irregular trends in students' enrolment for terminal examinations must be addressed through the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system recommended in the National Policy on Education. It was also reported that administrative practices would significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

It was reported that administrative practices are effective in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State. This finding is as a result of respondents positions to some of the items indicating that they agreed that teachers' welfare should be improved to make them more committed to facilitating effective learning and



discipline among students, needed facilities and equipment should be provided for effective learning in schools, effective supervision and monitoring of schools should be intensified, appropriate records of students' enrolment, cumulative performances and withdrawal should be kept to help to track down students that do not register for SSCE in their schools, educational managers to facilitate inputs towards curbing all forms of examination malpractices through participative management behaviour, efforts should be targeted at using research data in educational planning to help in forecasting and tracking irregular trends in terminal examinations, every school should organize extra-moral classes to steer students' interest away from miracle centres, issues in students' engagement with "outside" WAEC should always be discussed during PTA meetings, while they disagreed that examination ethics and values should be incorporated into the morning assembly manuals of schools. This is in agreement with the finding of Nicholas, Anthony and Yuda (2013) who reported that the causes of apathy among secondary school students to in-school examination which established that there are institutional, administrative and students based causes of apathy. It was also found that administrative practices would significantly help in curbing apathy to in-school external examinations among secondary school students in Anambra State.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it is concluded that the management practices are adopted for curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations in Anambra State. The management practices such as educational policies and administrative practices are effective for curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations. Educational policies and administrative practices guide the enrolment and registration of students in schools to discourage secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations.

## **6. Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should endeavour to review and improve its' policy document on educational administration in order to address policies that will help in deterring students from engaging in in-school external examinations in Anambra State.
2. Secondary school principals should also endeavour to discharge effective management of secondary education to encourage students to deter from engaging in curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations.
3. Government should also endeavour to make laws that are people-friendly and discouraging but not laws that are weak and intimidating which can be easily breached in curbing secondary school students' apathy to in-school external examinations.
4. Sound education of students on the dangers of apathy to in-school external education be promoted among secondary school students. This will aid them in reposing confidence in their ability to deter from apathy to in-school external examination.



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