

Examination's Administration: An Integral Part of Educational Assessment

HABIBU Kamilu

+2348029930440/ +2348029930440

habibukamilu20@gmail.com

GARBA Shuaibu Wangara

+2348065897406

gswangara@gmail.com

&

ABDULHAKEEM Bello Rimi

abellorimi@gmail.com

+2348036403930

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education Federal University, Dutsin-ma

Abstract

It is not impossible for all the effort put into producing and refining a testing instrument to be nullified by unscrupulous attention to the administration of the test thereby making the outcome of the test to become invalid and unreliable. In administering any test, time must be spared to ensure that the testing environment is suitable for the exercise and that no candidates enjoyed undue advantage which is not available to others, (Anikweze, 2014). After the assessment is produced, it requires administration under proper circumstances. Policies should be designed for examination administration to delineate expectations for candidates' conduct and provide protocols for security to reduce opportunities for dishonesty. The validity and reliability of assessment are dependent on many factors, among which is administration of the measurement. The focal points of this paper are the principles of examination administration and the good practice in the institutions of learning, highlighting principles and good examination administration practice and a summary with suggestions that, if followed, lead to successful test administration in any given institution of learning.

Key words: Administration, administrator, assessment, examinations, examinees, cheating, learning outcomes.

Introduction

Assessment of learning has been, and always be, regular future of classroom practice in every institution of learning. For teachers to establish whether their students have been learning, examinations have to be constructed, administered, scored and graded appropriately. Examinations usually provide information about examinees' capabilities and performances. It also enables meaningful observations and comparisons to be made of the kind of behavior which learners acquire during the teaching-learning process (Farrant, 2000).

Similarly, the students' performances should reflect similar grade, in the same examination, and similar results should be obtained by groups of comparable candidates using the examination and other occasions, even when marked by different examiners. This kind of result can only be obtained if, among others, the examination is carefully administered, implying that the quality of examination administration ensures its validity and reliability (Rukundo & Magambo, 2010).

It is, therefore, necessary to the examination's managers to learn the principles and practice of the examination administration to ensure these qualities of an examination are maintained in testing. When the examination administrators are not conversant with the principles of examination administration, the

whole target of examination process is defeated and more often than not, both the examiner and the examinees bear the cost.

Across the globe, a number of scholars have documented vast and interesting literatures regarding principles of examinations' administration and good examinations' practices in the institutions of learning. Rukundo and Magambo, (2010), For example, suggested that examination can be fruitfully administered by any cautious teacher or examination administrator, as long as prescribed examination procedures are rigorously followed. They maintained that examination administration becomes easier if;

- The students are motivated to do their best,
- Examination administration directives are followed closely,
- Time allowed for the examination is accurately kept,
- Any significant event that may influence the examination scores are recorded, and
- Examination materials are promptly collected.

Principles of Examination Administration

One of the most useful instruments in teaching-learning process is examination (Azimiroshan, 2016). The most significant guiding principle for administering any examination is that all examinees should be given an impartial chance to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes anticipated or planned. This implies physical and psychological environment in which the examination is taking place has to be conducive for the examinees to facilitate the achievement of the examination outcomes. The factors that may obstruct the validity of the measurement process also have to be controlled. Even though, the evidence regarding the effect of physical and environmental conditions on examination performance is not leading to a definite result, examinees should be relaxed as possible and distractions should be removed or taken to the barest minimal (Linn & Miller, 2005).

Another principle of examination administration is that, students having positive attitude toward an examination. People are likely to perform better at any endeavor, including examination taking when they approach the experience with a positive attitude. Unfortunately, teachers frequently failed to help students develop positive attitude toward examinations. Students are not likely to perform at their best when they are excessively tense, thus, the experience of examination anxiety among some students (Thorndike, 1997).

It is very important that examination administrators are qualified enough and trusted persons. This is to ensure that examinations are properly managed to obtain valid and reliable results. Examination administrators need to have opportunities to learn their responsibilities as a prerequisite to accurate examination result (United States Department of Labour, 2007). It should also be noted that as well prepared examination is easier to administer, and reverse is true with a poorly prepared examination. It is equally important to release that a successful examination administration exercise is the product of examination planning. Cheating is most likely to occur in a poorly planned examination, thus, proving a challenge to examination administration (Rukundo & Magambo, 2010). However, a good examination administration irrespective of examination preparation is paramount

Examination Administration Practices

Satisfactory examination practice lies in the hands of examiner, who should ensure the examination exercise, administers smoothly. The period before the examination, during, and after the examinations should be effectively handled to release a highly efficient examination period.

Period Before the Examination

The security of examination instrument, all examination materials used in the assessment process whether Paper and Pencil Test (PPT) or Computer-based Test (CBT) have to be properly secured. Lack of security may result in some examinees having access to questions before the commencement of the examinations, along these lines, compromising the quality, and invalidating their scores. To avoid the irregularities, examination administrators should, for example, keep all related materials in locked rooms or cabinets and limit access to those materials to staff involved in the assessment process. Examination security is also a responsibility of examination developers to ensure the examination is not compromised over time. To maintain the security, test developers should introduce new form of tests periodically (United States Department of Labour, 2007).

In line with the security of examination, examination authorities should try to open cartons containing the examination materials and look over the contents to verify the appropriate examination levels and quantities have been received. After inspection of the materials, they should be securely stored since examination monitors may during unannounced visit inspect these materials to ascertain the seals have not been tampered with before the due date (Gronlund & Linn, 1990).

The following considerations should be part of prior preparation checklist:-

- i. Examinees have been notified regarding the examination date, time and venue,
- ii. Administrative Instructions: the instructions guiding the examination should be made plain to the examinees before they start writing. Indicate the start and the stop time for the examination. Rubrics should be clear and unambiguous, and should be positive e.g. *“show all rough work on the left margin. Credits will be given for illustrative diagrams and use of local examples”* (Anikweze, 2014).
- iii. Candidates have been reminded to bring materials necessary for the examination,
- iv. All students with special needs (e.g eye glass and hearing aids) have been considered before the commencement of the examination,
- v. All adequate invigilation has been planned,
- vi. Examination invigilators have read appropriate examination administration procedures such as timing and examination regulations,
- vii. The rooms where the examination is to be conducted have adequate ventilation and the lightning and have been properly arranged. Anikweze, 2014 opined that, the venue for the examination should be properly lit such that no candidate need crane the neck or squeeze the eyes in order to see an instruction on the board. On the other hand, the lighting should not be dazzling to the eyes as to cause distractions to the examinees. An examination that stretches to late evening such that the papers and the writing are no longer legible to the examinees and will certainly yield unreliable results.
- viii. Seats are arranged in such a way that candidates cannot look at each other’s work,
- ix. Candidates have been strongly prepared for the examination by suggesting to them ways of studying, giving them practice questions like those to be used, teaching them examination taking skills and stressing the value of examination as far improving learning (Gronlund & Linn, 1990: National College of Testing, 2010)

- x. When all is set for the examination, secure the room including the writings, like “Examination in Progress”
- xi. Limited Acoustics: Examination administrators should ensure that the venue is not prone to external noise that may distract the examinees such as moving vehicles, horns, disco music and chatting by staff or other students. Within the examination room, unnecessary movement of seats and shuffling of feet should not be allowed during examination (Anikweze, 2014).
- xii. Where necessary, security personals should be adequately supplied so as to safe guard both the examination administrators and the examinees from any form of attack.
- xiii. The ICT personals that are directly related to examinations (where applicable) should be limited. They should receive a special training on how to safe guard the examinations’ questions and the results which are the heart of any academics.
- xiv. Working Facilities: Ensure that there enough seats for all the candidates to be comfortably seated. The spacing of seats should be such as to discourage cheating by cooperating students. All necessary examination materials should be available in adequate quantity before the start of the examination. All learners participate in an examination must be supplied with the question papers and any other necessary equipment before the start of the examination (Anikweze, 2014).

Period During the Examination

The paper preparation for examination may not produce the desired result if the conditions during the examination are mishandled. It is the cardinal duty of the examination administrators or institutions to ensure the conditions the exercise (Gronlund & Linn, 1990: National College of Testing, 2010). The following are some of the guidelines that need to be observed to ensure required conditions for successful examination are fulfilled:-

- i. Avoid giving hints to students who ask about individual item. If the item is ambiguous it is the responsibility of the course lecturer to clarify for the entire group. If it is not ambiguous refrain from helping the students to answer it. The challenge is that at times, refraining from giving hint to examinees who ask for help may be difficult especially for new comers in the field of testing. Nevertheless, giving unfair aid to some students decrease the validity of the test results and lowers class morale.
- ii. Discourage cheating. Condition, however, it might be necessary to discourage cheating by special seating arrangements and careful supervision. Candidate receiving unauthorized assistant from others examinees during the examination have the same deleterious effects on validity of examination results and class morale, as does receiving special hints from the teacher. We are interested in students doing their best, but for valid result, their scores must be based on their unaided efforts.

The examination administrator should periodically be walking around the room and for observing how the students are doing, is also of paramount importance in preventing cheating. The obstacle is that many invigilators define the term invigilation as “being present in examination room”. They subsequently become physically present but spend their time reading novels, marking and scoring previous tests, engage in social media platforms. The best invigilator in an examination is the one who observe students doing the examination not being preoccupied to one’s desk (Gronlund & Linn, 1990, Mehrens & Lehman, 1999: Sewagegn, 2013).

Another way of discouraging cheating is discouraging students from using any form of communication devices, either in the room where the examination is being administered or while in supervised break, such as birth room visit. It will be better if students are reminded

- earlier that they may not use any devices including but not limited to cellular telephones, audiocassettes players, radios etc. while taking an examination.
- iii. Ensure that no eating takes place in the examination. Students should not be allowed to bring any food items in the examination room, unless it is on proven medical grounds. Under such circumstances, it is advisable that special arrangement are made in advance for purposes of securing a designated area where the food item could be kept, to avoid distracting those who do not require the food items (Rukundo & Magambo, 2010),
 - iv. Identify each examinee to prevent a situation where someone may attempt to take the examination on someone else's behalf. Students should, therefore, be informed in advance to bring with them their identity cards and/or examination's cards (Mbarara University of Science and Technology, MUST, 2008),
 - v. Handle emergencies appropriately. If an examinee becomes ill during the examination, and must leave the examination hall, they should not be allowed to return. The examination administrator is advised to make a comprehensive report about the candidate's situation to make it possible for authorities to consider a retest for such a candidate, to be scheduled for another time (Rukundo & Magambo, 2010),
 - vi. Inform students on the progress of testing. It is the responsibility of the examination administrator to keep the students informed of the time remaining (e.g. writing the left on the whiteboard at 15-minute intervals (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1999: Sewagegn, 2013)

Period After the Examination

Sequentiality is needed for a successful examination process until all the materials are secured in the examination administrators' hands. After the completion of the examination, the following are expected:-

- i. All test materials and documents, both used and unused should be collected and counted for. They may be kept in a secure and lockable facility.
- ii. Count through candidates' scripts to ensure that they correspond with the names on the examination attendance register. Counting also eliminates scenarios where the attendance register shows a student attended an examination but his script is not seen or found.
- iii. The examination administrators should carry all the examination's related materials to the examinations' office and make sure that they signed out after submission.
- iv. The chief Invigilator (team head) should write a comprehensive report concerning the conduct of the examination, pointing out strengths and challenges faced during the conduct of the examination and even suggest ways for overcoming the identified problems in the future.

To sum it up, Dalha, (2020) opined that the following guidelines should be adhered to by examination administrators before, during and after the conduct of an examination:-

- i. The examination administrators should be familiar with the examination timetable (Venue, date and time),
- ii. He/she should not be absent during examination, if it becomes necessary, he/she should make a local arrangement with his/her co-workers with the permission of the chief invigilator,
- iii. Non-teaching staff are not to invigilate any examination unless otherwise it becomes extremely necessary,
- iv. The ratio of an invigilator to the number of students to invigilate is 1:40 in normal circumstances,
- v. Invigilators should ensure of what they collect from the chief invigilator,

- vi. He/she should be in the examination room 30 minutes to the commencement of the examination,
- vii. The examinees should be reminded on the starting and stoppage time for the examination,
- viii. The course lecturers should be available, in case there is need for corrections.
- ix. The examination administrator should be vigilant and mobile throughout the examination period,
- x. He/she should duly sign the examination booklets and the examination cards,
- xi. Chief invigilator should be going round from time to time to ensure the smooth running of the examination,
- xii. The examination administrator should not praise or thank any student for finishing the examination in time,
- xiii. He/she should not force the candidates to submit unless when the examination time is over,
- xiv. He/she should not add a minute to the candidate's examination's time,
- xv. There should be no discrepancy between the number of students on the examination attendance register and that of the scripts,
- xvi. The students should sign-in and out for proper records,
- xvii. The examination administrator should report any case of examination misconduct, in writing, to the chief invigilator.

Conclusion

Examinations are among the fundamentals of teaching-learning process, it is carried out at all levels of learning in different institutions of learning. Reputable examination bodies have sets regulations and procedures in the administration of the examinations to individuals, whether in the classroom or designated settings. Just as classroom environment is vital in teaching-learning and personal educational growth and development of individuals, so is participation in examinations.

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