



# **EXAMINATION CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT**

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL END-OF-COURSE EXAMINATION CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT: THE CAMEROON EXPERIENCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Examination crisis can be a serious besetting problem that can totally impede the process of assessment and consequently, either, punctures the expected results or produces attainments that do not reflect the actual performance of individual candidates or the whole certification process. Identifying the causes, in a multicultural society like Cameroon, where there are two subsystems of education co-existing side by side is necessary. What is more important, in an examination crisis, is the management of such crisis in order to either stop it from having negative effects on the assessment process or make sure that steps are taken to resolve its reoccurrence. The impact of examination crisis on certificate recognition can be devastating while efficient management of any inevitable human-induced crisis can garner respect for the examination institution.*

*This paper will therefore, handle the above issues with the view to presenting an analysis of the examination crisis in the Cameroon context and making remedial recommendations. There are many examination bodies in Cameroon – the GCE Board, Office du Baccalaureat, the Department of Examination in the Ministry of Secondary Education as well as the Department of Examinations in the Ministry of Basic Education – but this paper will limit its discussion to examination crisis in secondary school end-of-course examinations conducted by both the GCE Board (and l'Office du Baccalaureat du Cameroun). The objectives, procedures, causes and effects on the examinee (the candidates) and the examining institution (the GCE Board) as well as some recommendations are discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

Educational assessment and examination crisis are two co-existing partners; one cannot be discussed without the other being guarded against or precautionary measures taken against the evil. Therefore, to know about them and prepare against them is to assure or guarantee quality, in our examinations.

The Cameroon GCE Board and the Office du Baccalaureat du Cameroon (OBC) which handle most of the end of secondary school examinations, and 15 years old in the assessment business, were created in order to maintain sanity in examinations and authenticity in the award of certificates. In their effort to achieve this goal, they have constantly employed various strategies to fight examination, and the occurrence or threat of it. In fact, the strength of an Examination Board can best be measured, not in a crisis free atmosphere, but much more in its management of any besetting crisis. This paper which is on *End of Course Examination Crisis and Management: The Cameroon Experience* will proceed by defining involved terms, spelling out the objectives of the paper, discussing the historical background, types of crisis, management strategies and presenting a conclusion and some recommendations.

This paper aims at identifying end-of-secondary-school-course examination crises in Cameroon; their causes and management strategies employed by the GCE Board (and the Baccalaureat Board) not only in crisis situations but also to ensure crisis free examinations.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

*Examination crisis* can be defined as a turning point (critical in nature) or a hitch in the assessment process of the body of knowledge acquired by candidates on a given syllabus (to be covered within a specific period and) whose consequence falsifies assessment of candidates' acumen. Thus, examination crisis will refer to anything that punctures, "in a recognisable scale," the process of assessment. This situation can either be localised or broad-based resulting in a repetition of the examination or the replacement of the questions set.

Also, persistent negative examination results (crisis results) in a subject can be indicative of a learning crisis where a greater number of candidates in that subject score persistently, poorly, year by year. Candidates regard the subject as a nightmare and therefore are either traumatised or lose confidence in themselves. It could also be that they are not putting in enough effort due to certain factors such as presumptions, poor teaching or inadequate staffing. Examination crisis can either be teacher-induced, candidate- induced, state/politically-induced, parent-induced, or management-induced – all human induced examination crises.

**Management** is the organisational strategies or techniques used to achieve and maintain targeted goals or set objectives. These strategies are either those of administration, supervision or the skilfulness and resourcefulness of all workers – managers and employers alike.

Therefore, **management of examination crises**, are the sum total of the organisational, administrative and supervisory measures employed to thwart any crisis (hindrance or disaster) encountered in the process of assessing candidates' knowledge in a particular subject within a specific period, thus, ensuring a just and smooth assessment of such persons' acumen.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### ***From London to Ministry of National Education, Yaounde – Cameroon (1976-1993)***

The GCE London tradition was handed down in 1976 from London to the Ministry of National Education Yaounde. Due to grave irregularities noticed in the Ministry's conduct of the Examination, the Cameroon GCE Board came into being.

The Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board is a semi-independent examination body in Cameroon set up by Presidential Decree No. 93/173 of 1<sup>st</sup> July 1993 and charged with the responsibility to conduct the General Certificate of Education Examination at the Ordinary and the Advanced Levels. To its responsibility was later added the organisation of the Baccalaureat Technique and its related examinations for English speaking candidates.

The GCE assessment tradition, is therefore a British inherited certification system practised by Boards in the UK and a few Commonwealth Countries (Cameroon inclusive), modern trends notwithstanding.

### ***From Ministry of National Education to Cameroon GCE Board (1993 – 2009)***

History notes that the Cameroon GCE Board emerged out of a defective management-induced examination crisis. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1993, the Cameroon GCE Board came into being by Presidential Decree No. 93/172. It was in answer to the devastating management experienced by the General Certificate of Education Examination under the Ministry of National Education. The irregularities, which became alarming and degenerated, every passing year, ranged from poor printing, wrong presentation and pagination, wrong spellings, shortage of question papers and materials, late arrival of question papers at some examination centres, wrong instructions, non-respect of the published timetable and examination leakages. The conduct of the then General Certificate of Education Examination degenerated to crisis point that could not be ignored. This led the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC) and The Cameroon Parents/Teachers Association (CAPTAC) to clamour for the creation of an Examination Board, which they were confident, would bring sanity into the examination. This presidential decree and the text of application (order No. 112/CAB/PM of October 12, 1993) marked the end of the GCE Examination crisis which culminated into the birth of the Cameroon GCE Board.

The scope of the GCE Board was limited to GCE Examinations only. But when language crisis characterised the Baccalaureat Technique Examinations and other related examinations, with poor translations of questions from French into English being common place, the result being massive failure of Anglophone candidates, on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1997, the Presidential Decree of July, 1993, was expanded to cater for Anglophone students in Lycée Techniques.

The GCE Board therefore experienced two historic crises – the one caused by the sardonic conduct of the Cameroon GCE Examination and the other, due to the worsening language translation from French into English, for English speaking

Baccalaureat Technique candidates, impeding understanding of the questions and therefore producing devastating results for Anglophone candidates.

With the above situation constituting the first ever examination crisis experienced in Cameroon, it was highly thought that the creation of an examination Board would bring sanity into the Anglophone examination system, or solve once and for all, the problems plaguing the GCE Examinations at the time. In summary, problems of poor setting, cheating, translation, use of unqualified markers, delays in publication of results, conflict in roles and incompetence were all responsible for the historic GCE crisis, which culminated in 1993, with the cry for an Examination Board. It is necessary to stress that the historical crises described above was not very much content oriented; it was management induced.

Cameroon being bi-cultural with two sub-systems of education, Office du Baccalaureat du Cameroon is another assessment institution set up by Presidential Decree about the same time as the GCE Board and charged with the responsibility to conduct secondary school leaving examinations for French speaking Cameroon candidates. They issue the Baccalaureat certificates, an academic qualification, which Francophone candidates and international students sit, at the end of their Grammar School (Lycée) course. It is a certificate whose existence dates as far back as 1808 under Napoleon and is the main diploma for entry into the university. Though originating from that source, the examination has been adapted to suit the realities and the needs of the Cameroonian society. The transfer of the conduct of the Baccalaureat Examinations from the Ministry to an Examination Board (O.B.C.) was in recognition of the shortfalls that characterised the old order.

## **TYPES OF EXAMINATION CRISES**

In its 15years of existence, the Cameroon GCE Board has been able to identify various forms of examination crises perpetrated by educational stakeholders – teachers, parents, supervisors, security agents, printers, staff of examination bodies and candidates. While some crises can be described as localised because they are limited to accommodation centres where the candidates write the examination, others are well

known to be widespread (regional or national). Based on their origin, examination crises can be categorised as follows:

- a) Teacher/Invigilator- induced Crises.
- b) Management- induced Crises.
- c) State/Politically- induced Crises.
- d) Parent- induced Crises.
- e) Candidate- induced Crises.

**A) *Teacher/Invigilator induced Crises:*** Teachers/invigilators have been generally found to be at the root of wide examination catastrophes such as examination leakages. They, not only set, moderate and proof read the questions; they administer and invigilate the examination. Also, their desire to make a name for themselves by being identified as good teachers pushes some of them to search for and divulge questions to their candidates. Once a candidate has fore knowledge of some of the questions, the multiplier effect comes in, for, the questions become common knowledge or an open secret. A leakage is considered as an examination crisis at its worst, with a teacher or school authority charged with the safekeeping of examination questions detected at its source. An examination leakage may either be localised or generalised; it may also affect either all papers of the examination or papers of a particular period.

The Cameroon GCE Board has suffered three major and widespread examination leakages – one in 1996 which was KCHS Anyajua based and which affected all examination question papers. The other leakage was in 2000 – the GBHS Bamenda leakage – masterminded by a trusted and close aid of the Chief of Centre. The difference between the 1996 and the 2000 leakage is that the 2000 leakage was limited, geographically, to Bamenda and Tubah sub-divisions and affected two subjects only - Advanced Level History and English Literature - while that of 1996 involved the whole examination. The third was in 2008 involving a staff of the printing press who leaked questions to her daughter resulting in the Board replacing Ordinary Level Religious Studies and Economics question papers.

The Office du Baccalaureat du Cameroun, a sister Examination Board of the same age as the GCE Board, has not been spared. It has experienced some worrying crises though localised in its spread. In 2003, in Bafang in the West Region of Cameroon, the Superintendent in charge of the conduct of the examination in that centre

opened the wrong question paper for the day. The Bacc Board had to replace, in all centres in the West Region, the wrongly opened question paper. In 2006 at Esse in Mefou and Afamba Division in the Centre Region, three question-paper envelopes disappeared due to the absent-mindedness of the “Charge de Mission” who abandoned envelopes carrying question papers in his house to attend a funeral ceremony. When he came back, he did not bother to check his stock.

**Persistent poor results** over many years, in a particular subject, as indicated in the GCE Board’s table below is an indicator of crisis results whose origin point to either the teacher or the administrator. Poor handling of the subject in the classroom scares away candidates from lectures. That is the case with Mathematics at the Ordinary Level at the Cameroon General Certificate of Education Examination. In the case of Ordinary Level French Language, an additional element comes in, for which the administration is responsible. For example, while town schools in Cameroon are over staffed with French teachers, many of the village schools are under-staffed. In 2007 and 2008, a candidate indicated, as answer to a French question, that they, in their institution, have never had a French teacher and therefore had nothing to give back to the examiner. As for English Language, while some candidates are presumptuous of the fact that they are Anglophones by birth and therefore do not need to spend extra time studying English, the teachers do not give them enough work in this subject to enhance their capacity or performance. The little home work that is given is not followed up. The consequence is persistent bad results. This is compounded by the fact that these three subjects are compulsory in the Cameroon context and, without English, the candidate is deprived entry into the lone Anglo-Saxon University in Cameroon (University of Buea). The cumulative effect is that a social crisis, engendered from persistent poor subject results, produces crisis examination results. The table below indicates that the results in these subjects often fall below 45 percent and the Board insists on publishing subject reports for didactic purposes.

<i>Sub Name/Code</i>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>	<i>% pass</i>
<b>530 Eng.</b>	34.62	41.41	34.48	41.83	41.36	30.90	31.56	24.43	54.35	37.69
<b>570 Maths</b>	46.79	20.66	16.64	18.14	36.43	16.83	23.99	18.38	15.35	20.46
<b>545 French</b>	21.23	30.00	26.74	55.89	17.66	25.48	22.63	24.08	24.21	23.78

***B) Management induced Crises:*** Institutions charged with the organisation of examinations and the award of certificates are also known to have been at the source of crises in examinations through lapses in their administration. These range from the appointment and recruitment of persons of questionable character as examination officials, putting in place inadequate security measures, insufficient checking and cross-checking of the content of question paper packets and other examination related materials, either abuse of examination rules and regulations or unclear regulations, non-respect of deadlines, misdirection of question papers and materials, misappropriation of examination registration fees by Chiefs of Centre, who act as intermediaries between registering candidates and the GCE Board, timetable shortfalls, poor finance management, inadequate implementation of processes and procedures and poor personnel management. The above shortcomings and many more, which are management induced, may cause serious examination problems in the field and consequently escalate an examination catastrophe.

The Cameroon GCE Board's leakage of 1996, for which all question papers had to be replaced instantly, was caused by the acting principal of KCHS Anyajua, acting on behalf of the Chief of Centre. That of 2000, which originated from GBHS Bamenda, was due to the fact that the principal of the school sub-let his responsibility to his secretary whom he so much trusted. Thus, the appointment of men of timber, calibre and integrity to positions of responsibility is cardinal.

***C) State and Politically- induced Crises:*** Accumulated unemployment has, in recent times, led to a new type of examination related crisis – certificate forgery. Many of the unemployed want to occupy themselves by continuing studies, getting themselves into the public service or travelling abroad for greener pastures. Consequently, unqualified high school graduates look for fraudulent means to acquire certificates so as to gain admission into the university or travel abroad. Others, hit by the economic crisis, buy fake certificates in order to qualify to work for government. For example, the Post Newspaper of 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2009 (Vol. 01051) informed the public about 777 recruited Civil Servants who were caught having submitted fake certificates in order to be employed and were presently facing dismissal. It added that additional

hundreds were going to follow. Quite a handful of Cameroon GCE certificates sent for verification by the American based W.E.S, the Swedish based V.H.S. and collected from frustrated Cameroonians were found to be fake.

In our country today, academic inflation exists where many unemployed academic graduates vie for too few jobs available. This leads to an intensified search for the qualification advertised for the job. The rush for qualifications today is like *'too much money chasing too few commodities.'* With the existence of economic crisis in Cameroon, educational devaluation and academic inflation have taken root. Many unqualified Cameroonians get involved in rampant certificate forgery (thus pushing employers to put more faith in certificates and diplomas awarded by recognised examination bodies).

***Underfunding*** of examinations Boards by the state is dangerous. Examinations are generally one of the most expensive businesses each state grapples with. While some states allow examination Boards to be financially independent, and therefore, fix such fees as would enable them to run their examinations with ease, others prefer to put the financial burden on their government. They, therefore, keep the examination fees low and make up for the difference, by heavily subsidising income from fees, through regular annual subventions. But what happens, in practice, is that state subventions are less than the amount required. The total amount of money from low fees collected plus the state subvention become insufficient to cope with the processes involved in the conduct of the whole examination. The consequence is that either the examination board is saddled with an accumulated debt burden or *underfunding becomes the source of an examination crisis.*

Examination Boards, poorly financed, are compelled to print question papers in cheap, dubious and unguaranteed printing houses. There is insufficient official transportation means for both question papers and other examination materials. The result is that security materials are transported by public transport. Examination personnel charged with the conduct of examinations are disgruntled with their compensation and therefore become lax. Some even easily become susceptible to examination malpractice by taking tips. Grosso modo, the Examination Boards are

therefore unable to sufficiently cope with their expenditure as a consequence of State under funding. Such a situation is healthy ground for an examination crisis, examples being, massive leakage or boycott of marking by examiners where conference marking is the practice. There is also a nonchalant attitude by invigilators and, therefore, malpractices, like the use of pre-prepared materials, collusion, massive cheating, impersonation, script substitution and many others, become rampant in most accommodation centres. The effect is that the whole effort to measure learning is defeated.

In our multicultural Cameroon, government heavily provides subventions to all its examination institutions, be it the GCE Board, the Baccalaureat Board or the Department of Examinations within the Ministry of Secondary Education. Government has also maintained stet the examination fee level for the past 15 years; that is, since the cradle of the Board. It is also true that the subventions, the government of Cameroon, gives the Cameroon GCE Board, have remained stagnant for the past 3 years, in spite of the increasing number of candidates.

Secondly, the indiscriminate opening of schools as a liberal educational policy, without a corresponding opening of roads to these areas for examination materials to be easily ferried there, let alone cross-checking what is happening there, could lead to an examination crisis. Once the candidates of one remote area are privy to the question papers, the rest of the nation will get it, especially with the advent of cell phones and the internet. There are places where cell phones have reached even though roads have not gotten there. Also, the poor infrastructure of the many government owned institutions (examination centres) with the total absence of question paper safes and good science laboratories are healthy grounds for the take-off of an examination crisis.

***D) Parent-induced Crisis:*** In the Cameroon situation, the Cameroon GCE Board has battled with a few embarrassing cases:

- In Njungo, in Kupe Muanenguba Division (June 2005), where Government Secondary School (GSS) Njungo is located, some villagers, unsuccessfully

manhandled the question paper safe. The culprits received village protection as they were transported to a hiding place for safety.

- In Tabeken, the location of Government Secondary School (GSS) Tabeken (June 2005), in the North West Region of Cameroon, as well as in Penda-Mboko where Government Secondary School (GSS) Penda-Mboko, is located, the villagers are known to have threatened invigilators with the view to influencing the conduct of the GCE examination. This search for good results or the craze for 100% score, therefore brings conflict between the villagers and the local examination authorities.
- The 2006 experience at IMPASS Tiko (South West Region), another accommodation centre, was that, a parent wrote the French O/L paper for his daughter without questioning the origin of the question paper and how the script was going to be inserted amongst the others.
- In 2007 at GHS Batoke, an Accommodation Centre in the South West Region, some malevolent parents launched a nocturnal attack on the question paper safe in that Centre, not because they wanted to have a pre-knowledge of the question papers for their children but, was more for *sabotage*, aimed at drawing the attention of the authorities of the Ministry of Secondary Education against the principal of the institution whom they detested.
- At Baptist High School Buea, in 2009, a parent convinced a university student living in his house to sit the GCE examination for his son. This act was finally detected as the public is always ready to cooperate with the Board to stamp-out such malpractices.
- Parents are known to make frantic efforts to have knowledge of the questions as they work in the printing press or even provide money for certificates to be bought for their children.

The criminal practice of *impersonation*, which is a situation where a candidate sits in for another candidate in an examination, fluctuates from year to year in examinations organised by the Board. But it must be known that it was a rampant practice in the early days of the Board, encouraged by over-zealous parents. It is known to occur all over the Republic, with most of the cases, intercepted by vigilant

invigilators and superintendents. Thus, while some parents cooperate with candidates to promote local examination crises, others vitiate this practice by keeping the Board informed of mal-practices or any ill-intention.

**E) Candidate-induced Crises:** Candidate-induced Crises are those examination crises at the root of which the candidates or students are the cause. Such crises are associated with candidates where they carry out moves to have pre-knowledge for their academic benefit. Unorthodox moves of this nature vary from candidate to candidate. Action is neither collectively pre-planned nor manifested together but the massive spontaneity in action over a number of examination centres makes it a crisis. During examination time in Cameroon, reports are received from many accommodation centres, of candidates guilty of all forms of cheating.

Candidates who have lost the ability to study or work hard in their studies often fall prey to malpractice. **Cheating**, which takes the form of collusion, the use of pre-prepared material, impersonation, copy work, script swapping, script substitution, verbal discussion or whispering in the examination hall, one script with two types of handwriting, unauthorised use of electronically assisted gadgets such as programmable scientific calculators and mobile phones and giraffing (peeping) constitute the main accommodation centre examination crises caused by malevolent individual candidates.

**Collusion:** Is a situation where two or more candidates agree to receive or give assistance to one another in the examination hall or candidates receive help from teachers or people outside the examination hall.

**Irregular activities within or without examination halls:** This involves swapping of worked scripts, folding of answer scripts; tearing, for use, part of the question paper or answer booklet during the examination; smuggling question papers out of the examination hall; verbal discussion within the examination room, giraffing, substituting or misappropriating the scripts of other candidates, having two types of handwriting on a candidate's script as well as the use of unauthorised electronically assisted gadgets like programmable calculators and mobile phones to procure an undue advantage over other candidates.

**The use of pre-prepared materials (PPM):** The bringing into the examination hall, helpful foreign materials, such as pieces of papers carrying summary notes, textbooks, mobile phones and sophisticated scientific calculators bearing ready-made formulae is quite common among candidates. The use of PPM has now advanced to take the form of body inscription, where candidates inscribe information on various parts of their body such as thighs (known in some countries as laptop publishing) and palms, inscription on body parts commonly known as “tattoo” among candidates, inscription on their rulers, chairs, tables (desktop publishing), walls of examination halls and handkerchiefs.

**Mass cheating** – This refers to massively organised cheating as discussed above. This malpractice usually succeeds where invigilation is sloppy and the school authorities collaborate with such candidates. Such a situation is collusion at its height and in Cameroon, the GCE Board and Office du Baccalaureat (OBC) are known to have cancelled results of such centres after thorough investigation. (June 2005 PGSS Limbe, Fako)

**Results or certificate forgery:** Candidates who were unable to carry out irregular activities (described above) during and after the examination, look at certificate forgery as the last chance. They go as far as paying publication media to include their names on the list of successful candidates; others seek the assistance of fraudulent relations or computer experts to obtain fake certificates.

**Assistance from examination stakeholders:** Some parents go as far as buying or peeping into question papers for their children, while, others for ostentation, try to buy certificates for their children. Also, some printers and staff of examination bodies sell question papers and fake certificates with no data reference or base.

**Impersonation:** Added to the above, the criminal practice of impersonation is still persisting in Secondary School End-of-Course examinations. It is a situation where one candidate sits in for another, either through hire or some remuneration in kind, pretending to be the real candidate. Often, the plot of impersonation originates from the registration or entry stage where both candidates register for the same subjects or the impersonator (candidate) registers and sits in for the person (non-candidate) he/she is impersonating. Attempts to impersonate used to be rampant at examinations in Cameroon, including those organised by the Cameroon GCE Board. But the mounting

vigilance by Board authorities and invigilators and, the three year suspension sanction, have done a lot to discourage it, each passing year, leading candidates to look for new avenues to cheat. Nevertheless, this phenomenon persists every year with a comparative study showing no real trend except fluctuations from one year to the other as indicated in the table below:

Type of Malpractice	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>Impersonation</i>	17	06	06	14	21 O/L	11 O/L	07 O/L	16
<i>Cheating</i>	272	251	229	616	150	130	215	164

Also, the use of **insult/assault on examination officials** usually by ill-prepared candidates as a way out should be recognised as another form of malpractice. While some candidates insult examination officials, others even deflate tyres of their cars or beat them up or threaten to terminate their lives as a means of distracting or intimidating them from effective supervision.

All the above are ways conjured by candidates to defy the proper measurement of knowledge gained on a given syllabus. They are characteristic of accommodation centre examination crisis in Cameroon and the magnitude of malpractice varies from year to year as the table above indicates.

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

It is considered obligatory for Examination Boards or institutions to take measures that would safeguard or protect the proper conduct of examinations as well as the award of authentic certificates to candidates. Such management strategies are composed of administrative know-how, management of human resources, putting in place security measures as well as preventive strategies.

### *a) Security Strategies Aimed at Averting Examination Crisis*

Security in examinations is a major concern in the organization of examinations, without which, many catastrophic happenings, perpetrated by stakeholders who want to have undue advantage over others, can puncture the evaluation machinery. Not only can

this examination injury be done by candidates and teachers, parents can also act in collusion with them.

Security measures in examinations are any measures put in place by an Examination Board to combat any act of theft, espionage, sabotage and/or cheating by candidates, teachers, school authorities and parents. There are precautionary steps instituted to ward off impending dangers that may occur before, during and after conducting an examination. What follows is the GCE Board experience.

### 1) **Security Measures During Registration**

- Presentation of National Identity Cards by external candidates, student identity cards for internal candidates and birth certificates for both internal and external candidates.
- Preparation of candidates' photo albums by each registration centre to be used for verification during the written part of the examination especially in cases of doubt.

### 2) **Question Preparation**

- Question Setting and Moderation: The use of the conference system for moderation made up of a selected few subject officials; the sealing of the moderated questions in conference and the supervision of the burning of papers used for rough work. It should be noted that in some countries like Malawi, question setters take an oath of secrecy administered by a magistrate.
- Strict supervision of type-setting of moderated questions by a few highly trusted computer operators is usually done.
- The destruction, by burning, of rejected print-outs during type-setting and carried out under the supervision of Board staff.

### 3) **At the Accommodation Centre**

- Each accommodation centre is expected to have a question paper safe or a strong room (*not a trunk*) for the storage of question papers and worked scripts. This safe must have provision for two locks with all the keys of one lock kept by the Chief of Centre and all the keys of the other lock kept by the superintendent.

This is to ensure that, at no one time, should either of them go to the question paper safe to take out anything without the presence of the other.

- Secondly, the number of security guards around the principal's office, where the safe is situated, is reinforced.
- The superintendent makes sure that no teacher invigilates the subject he/she is teaching.
- Searching of candidates before they enter the examination room and educating them about the "do's" and "don'ts" is necessary.
- The superintendent, who is the representative of the Registrar, is a highly respected teacher drawn from another institution different from where he/she is superintending.
- The establishment, at each accommodation centre, of a watchdog committee comprising a teacher (elected from among the staff), a parent/member of the civil society/a clergy, the principal of the school, with the superintendent as the chairperson of this committee of 4 persons. Their main duty is to watch the removal and opening of the packets of question papers in front of the candidates and to ensure the safe storage of worked scripts. They also make sure that if four packets of question papers have been supplied for a particular paper, all the four packets are intact (1 of 4, 2 of 4, 3 of 4, 4 of 4).

#### **4) Certificates**

Certificate forms are printed abroad and have special identification marks (seal) unknown to the public. This measure guards against the falsification of certificates; thereby, making it possible to easily detect and track down fake certificates.

#### **5) Marking**

- Before marking, the scripts are coded and all marks of identification deleted to avoid examiners discovering the identity of the candidate. Non-examiners are not allowed entry into the marking centres. The level of security in the marking centres is reinforced by the engagement of more security guards.

- Effort is made to ensure that examiners do not carry scripts out of the marking rooms. Tracking down the movement of scripts (by secretariat workers employed by the Board) to make sure that no script is missing from Booking-in to marking and B-checking is done.

## ***b) Administrative Strategies Aimed at Averting Examination Crisis***

### **1) Printing of Question Papers by a highly trusted printing press:**

It is ensured that the calibre of the printers and the staff sorting and assembling the question papers are of very low educational level so that the material printed is not easily understood by them. The supervision, by the Cameroon GCE Board staff, is to make sure that the workers are not reading; they are working. At the end of each day, they are thoroughly searched to ensure that nothing related to the examination printed for that day has been taken out. At the end of all stages of work in the press, be it printing or packaging, the participating workers are searched.

### **2) Question Paper Distribution to Accommodation Centres is done in two consignments – week one and then weeks two and three together. In the case of a leakage at an accommodation centre, the examination institution will not be faced with the replacement of question papers for the whole examination. The replacement will only involve question papers of the first week in a three-week examination. GCE Board officials, a week to the examination, personally hand over question packages to principals and superintendents for week one and then at the end of week one, those for weeks two and three are taken.**

- The receipt of question papers at the accommodation centre is done by both the Superintendent and the Chief of Centre who, together, store them in the question paper safe. Such a safe must have provision for a padlock so that the superintendent can strap his/her padlock. This is to ensure that at no one time should the Chief of Centre go to the safe without the superintendent or vice versa.

- The centre officials usually arrange question papers in the safe according to the examination time table, with the questions for the first day being on top and those for the last day being at the bottom to avoid mix-up at accommodation centres.

### 3) **Compilation and Publication of Results**

The Technical Centre, which is responsible for mark entry, in each marking centre, is a highly sensitive area and therefore is totally out of bounds to individuals not concerned with the exercise.

- 4) **A certificate audit committee** made up of some Board staff has been instituted at the Board to check and balance the number of certificate forms received and used as well as report irregularities to hierarchy for further action. Badly printed and destroyed certificate forms are burnt by this committee.

### 5) **Replacement question papers/repeat examination**

To fight the 1996 GCE leakage which cut across the whole country, the Cameroon GCE Board replaced its question papers on a daily basis without changing the examination timetable and without making any open official announcement. It was a painstaking and costly exercise but the Board had no other way out. The already jubilant candidates who had, very well, limited their revision to the leaked question papers were embarrassed in the examination hall to find new questions before them. Accommodation centre authorities were all requested to return the old question papers to the Board. It is this instruction that revealed the source of the leakage, for, KCHS Anyajua's packages showed that all sealed envelopes had been manhandled.

The 2000 leakage, which involved only some subjects at the Advanced Level-History Paper 2 and English Literature Paper 3 – originating from GBHS Bamenda, an accommodation centre, was treated in like manner. The leaked question papers were also replaced by the GCE Board and the candidates invited to come back to write on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2000 and the examination was marked under the same conditions as the normal one.

Thirdly, in 2008, a staff of the printing press, the Board used for printing, having leaked Ordinary Level Economics and Religious Studies questions to her daughter, the administration of the Board had to produce repeat examination papers in these subjects. Without interfering with the timetable, these two subjects were rescheduled for a Saturday. Replacement of question papers

promptly is only possible where a question bank exists and that is why, the enriching of the GCE Board's question bank is a yearly obligation to tide over catastrophes.

- 6) **The use of administrative sanctions:** The Examination Executive Committee (EEC), the Highest Academic Body of the Cameroon GCE Board, has fixed stiff measures against examination mal-practice to deter candidates from further involvement. For copy work in a paper, the result of that candidate, in that subject, is cancelled and, where cancellation is done in two or more subjects in the same session of the examination, all his/her results in the entire examination are cancelled. The same fate follows candidates caught with pre-prepared material (PPM) as well as those involved in collusion. Also, candidates guilty of impersonation and script substitution are slammed with a three year ban from entering for examinations organised by the Board. Teachers, invigilators, and school authorities caught colluding with candidates are suspended for 3 years from participating in examinations organised by the Board. While involvement in marks' modification attracts cancellation of the candidate's results of that session, the use of cell phones brings on the candidate a one-year ban. The other offences not cited above are also sanctioned depending on the gravity and circumstances. The Examination Executive Committee (EEC), in its meeting before results are published, examines the evidence against each candidate and sanctions appropriately as described above. Where more evidence is needed, the EEC puts in place a sub-committee to probe further into the case and act appropriately. The Registrar, the Chief Executive of the Board, is the Chairman of the EEC while the Deputy Registrar in Charge of Examinations is the Secretary.
- 7) **Appointment of men of character** and respect as examination officials is of great importance.

### *c) Preventive Strategies to Avert Examination Crisis*

- 1) Each Chief of Centre is responsible to make candidates acquainted with the examination regulations so that they, candidates, do not run into problems. Principals and teachers, a few days to the examination, are required to drill their candidates on examination regulations of the Cameroon GCE Board.
- 2) Thorough physical checking of candidates at the door, by invigilators, before candidates are admitted into the examination room is done to avoid the introduction of unauthorized material.
- 3) Teachers are not allowed to invigilate the subjects they teach. To check this, the superintendent procures a copy of the time-table and staff list and makes amendments where necessary.
- 4) Before the written and practical examinations, all external candidates are schooled to come daily with their National Identity Cards ready to present them upon request by the accommodation centre examination authorities.
- 5) Parcelling of worked scripts is done in the examination hall by the invigilators, supervised by the superintendent and Chief of Centre. Where there are many rooms, the superintendent and Chief of Centre must move from room to room to ensure that this exercise is properly done. This avoids the introduction of worked scripts answered out of the examination room at a central point.
- 6) Discourage, as much as possible, the holding of revision classes during the period of the examinations to allow candidates not to be derailed from their study plan.
- 7) Educate candidates on the stiff penalties that await all those involved in malpractices.
- 8) Heavily, sanction centres notorious for malpractice to deter any future occurrence.
- 9) Take an insurance policy for examination officials against possible dangers that could be wrecked on them by irate candidates and parents. This will encourage them to work harder.

## **CONCLUSION**

Even though engagement in the assessment business means readiness to fight examination crises, its occurrence, without an efficient management procedure, can dent the image of the examination institution. Proper handling of a crisis is proof of the strength of an examination institution. Secondly, successful crisis management makes the examining institution emerge stronger, more respected and lauded by the public whose confidence will double, and the credibility of its certificates enhanced. Examination Boards should therefore flex their muscles to fight any form of examination crisis with force and dexterity. It is most advisable that Examination Boards sanction its culprits before the state jumps in, for judgement by the state's legal institutions is slow to come and, by the time it comes, the crime and the impact are watered down and court judgement disappointing. Also, there is nothing as bad as certificate devaluation and educational inflation for they bring emotional stress and stall effort – the state to note. According to Sir Noble (Ibadan, 1964), “certificates belong to an international currency and no one may bring to this market counterfeits.”

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is necessary for Examination Boards to be either financially autonomous to fix their fees and make the required income or be sufficiently subsidized by the state. Where the state is giving subventions, such subventions should be commensurate to the yearly increase in the number of candidates.
- The creation of more jobs by the state to absorb the unemployed so as to reduce certificate trafficking and certificate devaluation which only goes to discourage educational effort is recommended.
- Users of qualification (employers) should be encouraged to write to the certificate issuing body for results/certificate verification and confirmation.
- Each Examination Board requires clear-cut regulations governing its entire examination; printed and published, so that stakeholders and candidates are well informed about the “dos” and “don'ts.”

- Also, sanctions for all forms of malpractice need be spelt out in a well-published document for public consumption – parents and candidates will take note and take precaution.
- Where there is evidence of an examination crisis, immediate action should be taken that will re-establish credibility.
- Introduction of certificates bearing the latest passport-size photographs of candidates.
- Examination Boards should be on constant alert, especially during the examination, as well as make available the necessary material to promptly rescue any situation at stake: for example, in the event of question paper leakages.

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