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**AN INSIGHT INTO FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST  
NIGERIAN STUDENTS' ATTAINMENT IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL  
CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION**

*Judith Makse PATRICK, Mingcai SUI, Banenat DIDAM, Nanbam Yuwana OJO*

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# An insight into Factors Militating against Nigerian Students' attainment in English Language Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination

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## Abstract

The incessant cries of the public towards senior secondary school students at the English language certificate examination failure in the national examination (NECO) and West African senior school certificate examination (WASSCE) have been going on for the last two decades. This article focuses on the rate at which the Nigerian education standard has fallen; it keeps reflecting in the persistent failure of this group of students being the bedrock of the educational system. To further find out if literature is giving a clear picture of the situation on ground, the researchers carried out a pilot study by administering a questionnaire on 72 senior secondary school teachers of English language from Plateau and Kogi states, North-central region of Nigeria to get their opinions on the issue at stake. Students' attitude, government's lack of proper attention, parents' laxity towards their children's education and in some cases, comprising with examination malpractice in the last two decades and teachers' quality and attitude were among some factors militating against the students' attainment in the said examination.

*Keywords:* Mass failure; Nigerian education; National Examination Council Organization (NECO); Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE); West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

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## Introduction

The multi-lingual and multi-ethnic stratifications of Nigeria favor the adoption of English as the official language and so is employed as inter- / intra- national language in the country. It is an important core subject in the school curriculum and a channel of international acceptability to Nigerians. English is being used at all levels of education in the country (Akinwamide, 2012). The focus of this paper is the secondary school level and specifically the factors affecting the performance of senior secondary school students in the English language certificate examination (Atanda & Jaiyeoba (2011) emphasize the importance of English in secondary school curriculum pointing out that English Language plays a central and strategic role in the school system because almost all the school subjects are taught using English Language. The place of English Language and its objectives as revealed in the secondary school curriculum cannot be substituted (p. 93).

The outcries on the incessant failure of students in the Senior Secondary certificate examination (SSCE) or West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASCE) and National Examination Council Organization (NECO) have been on the increase over the last two decades. The persistent poor performance of secondary school students in public examinations such as the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) in Oyo State, Nigeria in the recent times has made the development of secondary education in the State a difficult task. It is to be noted that this scenario is peculiar to the thirty-six states and Abuja (Federal Capital Territory) in the country (Adepoju & Oluchukwu, 2011).

Ajayi (2012) further elaborates that the situation is so pathetic that stakeholders keep on wondering why this level of education has persistently failed to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the society. The mass failure of students in public examinations constitutes wastage on investment in secondary education; it puts a big question mark on the quality of secondary education in the country. Each time the results of students in Senior school Certificate Examination (SSCE) are released, it has been a tale of woes and national embarrassment.

These target students are said to be the bedrock of the nation's educational system. This is further supported by (Joshua, 2004) saying, "Secondary education is the pivot around which the development of the nation's economy revolves. It is the engine room that provides the input, resources into the nation's economy and higher (tertiary) education production systems. Annually the results for English language among others have been going from bad to worse. Osunde and Ogi-egbaen (2005: 1) further highlighted referring to the WAEC Chief Examiner's report of SSCE 2001 thus "Candidates' answers revealed an ignorance of the rudiments of the English language, most candidates lost all the marks allocated to spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sequence of tenses because they were unable to handle these aspects of the language completely" (2005: 1). Bala (1997)

submitted that over the past few years, Nigeria is being confronted by the grim and damning realities of her worsening education standard in the failure ration dished out to States by the two examination bodies. It's safe now to say that it has become a ritual by each passing year. Oyinlola and Ofoelue (2011 ) also reported that over the years, the majority of students that sat for the May/June West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO) Senior Secondary School Examinations have been recording mass failure, not only in the area of overall performance of the students, but also in the key subjects like English, Mathematics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry where the high spate of failures have been a dominant feature of the students' performance. The emphasis of this review is on English language performance, the percentage of failure is annually higher than the percentage passed as represented in the sample table below:

Table 1. *Summary of the Statistics of Achievement of Nigerian Students in English Language MAY/JUNE WASCE (1996-2006)*

Year	Total entry	Total sat	Total Credit A1-C6	Total Pass D7-E8	Fail 9	Absent
1996	519667	516196 (99.3%)	58,533 (11.3%)	124,041 (24.0%)	333,614 (64.6%)	3,471 (0.7%)
1997	622433	618139 (99.3%)	40,488 (6.5%)	165,533 (26.8%)	412,118 (66.7%)	4,294 (0.7%)
1998	640626	636777 (99.4%)	53,990 (8.5%)	136,873 (21.5%)	417,312 (65.5%)	3,849 (0.6%)
1999	761060	757233 (99.5%)	73,531 (9.7%)	171,098 (22.6%)	491,593 (64.9%)	3,827 (0.7%)
2000	643378	636064 (98.9%)	68,792 (10.8%)	159,029 (25.0%)	408,243 (64.2%)	7,314 (1.1%)
2001	1040104	1025027 (98.6%)	267,251 (26.1%)	316,767 (30.9%)	441,009 (43.0%)	15,074 (1.4%)
2002	925289	909888 (98.3%)	223,568 (24.6%)	298,562 (32.8%)	387,758 (42.6%)	15,401 (1.7%)
2003	939507	929271 (98.9%)	269,824 (29.0%)	320,185 (34.5%)	314,225 (33.8%)	10,236 (1.1%)
2004	844540	833204 (98.7%)	252,271 (30.3%)	257,054 (30.9%)	323,879 (38.9%)	11,336 (1.3%)
2005	1080162	1064587 (98.55%)	272922 (25.63%)	371095 (34.85%)	393201 (36.93%)	15575 (1.44%)
2006	1170523	1154266 (98.61%)	375007 (32.48%)	39994 (34.13%)	342311 (29.65%)	16257 (1.38%)

Source: Computed from WAEC Annual Reports, 2006 WAEC Head Office Yaba, Lagos State.

By 2008 again the failure rate was equally high as reported by The Head, National office, WAEC, Dr. Iyi Uwadiae reported by Olugbile (Saturday, 27 Sep 2008) stated, “An analysis of the released results showed that 947,945 candidates,

about 83 per cent of the total number of candidates that took the examination, failed to obtain five credits passes and above in English, Mathematics and three other subjects. Furthermore, in 2009, the percentage of students who passed their West African Examination Council (WAEC) and NECO examinations, respectively, with credits in five subjects, including English language, Mathematics and one science subject was below 50 percent.

The same poor performance ratios were equally recorded by the students in the subsequent years of 2010 and 2011. This Olukunle (2010) further clarified in his report stating the fact that, only 30 percent of candidates who sat for Senior School Certificate Examination passed English language, which is the nation's official language and a prerequisite for admission to any course of study in any tertiary institution in the country. Perhaps, this ugly posture may have instigated the current worry stakeholders, who have been asking the factors responsible for the poor performance of students in these examinations. Some of the pertinent questions often asked are: How widespread is the incident of poor external results among Nigeria students? (Oyinlola & Ofoelue, 2011). It has been a sort of fault finding galore in Nigeria as each year passes by; government, parents, examinations organizers, even the students sometimes, mostly shifting blame on teachers forgetting other possible factors. Ajayi (2012) highlights further about the blame game taking place in Nigeria concerning the issue at stake: "Stakeholders have continued to trade blames on the causes of mass failure of students in public examinations. Some people shifted the blame on government, some on parents, some on society and students themselves with the teachers having lion share of the blame. As accusations and counter-accusations on who to blame on the mass failure of students will persist, the fact remains that all the stakeholders have roles to play in solving the problem of abysmal failure of students in public examinations" (p. 34).

This study is joining other researchers to review and also gather opinions from teachers of English language likely factors militating against these students' performance. The outcry is not only from the federal government but the individual state governments are also in the same situation, expending so much money on the payment for the national examinations annually as a form of encouragement to the students and supplement parents financial commitment also. Therefore, it can be said that their outcries are justifiable if that is the only factor. Characteristically, statistics reeled out by the two examination bodies each time the results of their examinations are released point to the fact that students drawn from both government-owned and private schools have not been performing up to the required standard despite the high investment which the government, both at the federal and state levels, as well as the parents have been making in the sector Oyinlola and Ofoelue (2011). The Cross River State Government queried 162 principals over the abysmal performance of its pupils in the last 2008/09 WASSCE. The situation is not peculiar to Cross River alone. In Oyo State, the state gover-

nment paid N250m examination fee for the last WASSCE, but only five per cent of the 52,000 students that wrote the examination had five credit passes and above, including English and Mathematics. Again, in Lagos State, the government since the administration of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu has been paying WASSCE and NECO fees. It is gathered that it spent the sum of N211million in 2008 as WASSCE fees for 60,040 candidates in 2008 and even more in 2009 but it was reported that 82 percent of them failed. This was in spite of the fact the government introduced reading habit in the schools. The mass failure is not limited to WASSCE alone. When the NECO released the results of its 2009 June/July Senior School Certificate Examination, 89.32 percent of the 1.2 million candidates that registered for the exam failed (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2010). The rate of poor academic performance of student in Nigeria had resulted to economic and social wastage and this have become a great concern to all stakeholders in education (Alimi, Ehinola & Alabi, 2012).

## Method

The research took a qualitative approach with 72 senior secondary schools teachers of English language randomly selected from Plateau and Kogi states, north-central Nigeria to respond to the open-ended section of the questionnaire as a pilot study. Opinions are analyzed by simple frequency and percentage as presented in *table 2* below.

## Results

### *Factors Militating against Students' Performance*

For the purpose of this article, one of the items from the questionnaire was selected as it gave their opinions on the subject matter. The question asked is stated below: *In your own opinion as an English language teacher, what can you say is the major cause of annual mass failure in English language at SSCE level?*

*Table 2* below presents the responses of 72 randomly selected senior secondary school teachers of English Language from Plateau and Kogi States; these are two out of the six states in North-central region of Nigeria. According to them there are numerous factors militating against students' performance at this level of education in the country. The highest percentage of responses of 28.9 has to do with students' attitude to learning English language and other subjects too. In some opinions aired; laziness, dependence on examination malpractice, lack of seriousness in studying, poor reading culture among others are further elaborated

in the discussion below. The lowest factor is pecked at 2.2 % is teacher- student relationship.

Table 2. *Opinions of selected senior secondary schools teachers of English language on factors militating against students' attainment in SSCE*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Teachers' Educational Background	8	5.9
Teachers' Attitude	5	3.7
Students' Educational Background	19	14.1
Students' Attitude to learning	39	28.9
Teacher-Student Relationship	3	2.2
Lack of Teachers Job Motivation	7	5.2
Inadequate Qualified Teachers	13	9.6
Lack of Parental Guidance	10	7.4
Examination Malpractice	6	4.4
Government's Lack of Attention to Education	25	18.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100</b>

## Discussion

### *Government*

The federal and state government of Nigeria has come under criticism from its citizens and some international organizations about the dilapidating state of education. According to the respondents' opinions, 18.5 % stated that they are partly to blame for the current situation on ground. In the same review has highlighted in the report of the former head of service of the federation, Professor Oladapo A. Afolabi thus, "... education in Nigeria is being jeopardized by policy somersault, constitutional malaise, politicization, poor funding, low student support, poor remuneration, low esteem for teaching profession, the perception that education is in the services and not the care sector of the economy, and other vagaries". In this same report Mrs. Mulikatu Bello linked the shortcoming in students' poor performance with government's failure to provide adequate facilities and equipment in schools, dearth of competent teachers, lack of favorable learning and teaching environment. Also incessant changes in the country's educational policies, adding that there was need for proper promulgation and enforcement of relevant legislations and public sensitization, as well as advocacy against the evil that examination fraud constituted.

It has been argued over and over again that a country can't outgrow its educational attainment economically and otherwise. This was also the opinion of President of the World Bank, Barber Conable, while introducing a World Bank policy study on education, said: "Without education, development will not occur; only an educated people can command the skills necessary for sustainable eco-

conomic growth and for a better quality of life” (Awosiyan & Idoko 2012). Furthermore, Udonquak (2010) laid emphasis on the fact that the link between literacy rate and the level of economic development in any society has long been established. While societies with high literacy rate are likely to boast of developed economies, countries with poor literacy rate as found in sub Saharan Africa are likely to be among the least developed economies.

Many more Nigerians have expressed their worries and pointed accusing fingers at the government for not taking education as a project of priority importance judging by the rate of dilapidation and underfunding bedeviling the sector. While one school of thought blamed the government for the entire mess, another believed a combination of factors created by the government, parents, teachers and students themselves led to the failures (Eze, 2011). This is supported by Omoniyi (2011) who gave a principal’s outcry under condition of anonymity saying, “that decaying infrastructure, lack of finance, insincerity on the part of the administrators of education in the nation, amongst a host of other factors accounts for the mass failure in student examinations, especially at the senior secondary school level.”

The examination councils have also received share of the blame by their inability to provide examination materials to students during Senior School Certificate Examination (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2010). Eze (2011) in her analysis submitted that part of the main problems may be the very poor record-keeping of even the examining bodies. This in her opinion is because at the time of research she could not get exams results over a ten-year period from WAEC for this analysis; as they were said to be unavailable by officials of the examining body.

Another problem being faced by WAEC is paucity of funds, which according to the Head of National Office; Uwadiae had been hindering the activities of the council. He expressed worry over the insufficient money to engage enough markers for the senior secondary school examinations (Awosiyan & Idoko, 2012). Uduh (2009) also highlighted that WAEC has been experiencing problem of shortage of committed examination functionaries over the years. These include Item Writers, Moderators, Examiners, Supervisors, Invigilators and Script checkers.

In an attempt to solve the problem however, the federal government set up an alternative examination body, known as the National Examination Council (NECO) in 2000, to conduct the same type of examinations. The emergence of NECO, with its headquarters at Minna, Niger State, brought some relief to candidates in that same year it took off. For instance, the majority of those who wrote the examination passed with flying colors, with about 80 per cent of them making their papers with good grades, including English and Mathematics at one sitting. This result was mired in controversy and subsequent results recorded a downswing in success rate and finally nose-dived in 2009, when the council released

results that indicated a less than 25 per cent candidates' pass at a sitting with English and Mathematics at credit level (Eze 2011). However, Mijinyawa in Aboderin (2012) had a contrary opinion that the emphasis placed on English language and mathematics subjects was a deliberate act by WAEC and NECO. "The emphasis on the two subjects has made the exam bodies and authorities use that as a means of earning their living from desperate candidates or parents who are left with no other option than to annually return to them for another registration.

### ***Students***

In as much as blame is being shifted from one stakeholder to other, students are not left out in their own share. Table 2 presented students' attitude as the highest responses of 28.9% factor responsible for mass failure. The respondents opined that students of these decades are lazy, dependence on examination malpractice, hatred for the subject, un-serious attitude towards the study of English language as a subject, and other school subjects. This in some of the opinions stated by the respondents that it is a necessity to study and pass those subjects. Literatures reviewed agree with the opinions of the respondents as discussed in this article. In a paper presented, The Principal Assistant Registrar of WAEC, Mr. Collins Uduh, said candidates' performance at the WASSCE in Nigeria, has been consistently poor and worrisome over a period of time. According to him, candidate-related factors such as students' inadequate preparation and poor coverage of the syllabuses, failure to adhere to instructions, lack of understanding of the demands of the questions, which is due to the poor reading culture, illegible handwriting and poor spellings, examination malpractice, among others, are responsible for the poor performance of students in the exams. He further submitted that, "It is disheartening to note that some candidates are unmindful of their handwriting. Some of them cannot write some of the letters and numbers properly and this makes scoring of their responses not only difficult but also inaccurate. No matter how brilliant a student is, his intelligence will come to naught if he cannot manifest it by way of accurate response to questions before him in an examination (Eze, 2011).

Others accused the students of being architects of their downfall, adding that they preferred viewing movies and foreign football leagues as well as other social activities to reading their books (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2010). Furthermore, students' lazy attitude to school work is also being noted in terms of the fact that nowadays they suffer a lot of distractions that make them lose concentration on their studies" such as chatting and face book on the internet, which is in contrast to the past where there was no cell phone to receive disturbing calls, and there was discipline in the school community according to a cleric's lamentation (Olukunle, 2010).

Some researchers have discovered that some secondary school students have got to the point of hating English language, this negative attitude according to Adelabu (1998) cited in Fakeye (2010) among other reasons are stated below: (1) Most students hate English language because of poor results recorded yearly in school certificate examination; (2) Teachers do not often engender positive attitude because they use bad method teach the subject; (3) The teachers do not have a thorough grasp of the instructional content and procedure.

Above and beyond, fashion, the advent of information technology and copying the culture of foreign lands, indolence and get rich quick without sweating syndrome have become the militating factors against the brilliant academic achievement of the nation's students. This was also buttressed by the opinion of a secondary school teacher in Abuja who identified lack of seriousness on the part of candidates as a major factor. He said, "Most of them believe they can make it in life as long as their parents are wealthy. This is common among well-placed Nigerians (Aboderin, 2012). In addition, Senator Gbenga Babalola representing Oyo North senatorial district in the senate was quoted saying, "*Any serious student will know that he or she has a limited time to spend in school, therefore, he will want to use his time profitably by engaging himself or herself in a rigorous academic exercise..., I think this cannot be achieved if both students and teachers are not disciplined.*"

Olukunle (2010) concluded his report saying the idea of willful disobedience to the school authorities, the idea of cutting corners by making advances to teachers to influence allocation of marks that they do not deserve in examinations and cheating constitute the cankerworm that has eaten up the fabric of the nation's educational system. Again, a visit to cyber cafe will expose the nation's students as they are always found there in multitude, having perfect concentration that they do not give in their classrooms, to their chat partners on the internet. Aside from this, most students find it difficult to burn midnight candle to read their books but they engage themselves in all-night free calls on their cell phones with their boyfriends and girlfriends. Obviously, students who engage in this act are undisciplined and the nation should expect nothing better than abysmal failure in their public examinations.

The society is also contributing in shaping students attitude negatively towards hard work, education. This is most glaring in the political dispensation where more illiterates are suppressing the masses because of money power, getting away unpunished for corruption and other criminal acts in the face of these young ones. Therefore, some do not actually see the need to study hard, pass national examinations and gain entry into the higher institutions. Focus is mostly placed in get-rich-quick syndrome. This opinion was supported by Prof. Dele Braimoh in (Aboderin, 2012) thus, "The moral decadence in the society has eaten into our education system. Candidates want to short circuit everything. There is no level

of commitment again. With this moral decadence in the society, producing candidates who see cheating as a way of life would be inevitable. Even politicians are not helping matters. These candidates look at politicians and admire their extravagant life style. To them, having an education is a waste of time.” In the same vein, Bello further attributed the poor performance to societal problems, adding that most candidates in Nigeria lack self-confidence as a result of inadequate preparation for the examination, including misplaced societal values that aid the breeding and perpetration of examination fraud and failure (Awosiyan & Idoko 2012). Furthermore, Offiong in (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2010) equally blame the societal values, which he said had distracted students by glamorizing materialism and relegating education to the background.

### ***Teachers***

The quality of teachers especially of English language has come under attack from all stakeholders in Nigeria; from the government to the teachers themselves. As presented in the table 2 above, 9.6 % of the responses opined that there is a shortage of qualified teachers of English in Nigerian secondary schools. Some stakeholders claim that the government of some states have improved teachers' welfare, infrastructural facilities and learning environment, therefore the principals and teachers are the first to blame (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2010). In the same report, teachers insisted government should share the blame for mass failure because of its inability to provide both human and material resources for the schools to function effectively. They further argued that some teachers recruited are incompetent just like the unavailability of materials to facilitate teaching and learning in the public schools. For example, lack of laboratories (Language or science), libraries and most of all inadequate and conducive classrooms. A secondary school teacher in Lagos was quoted saying, “Most teachers are not well grounded in the technicalities of their subjects and they don't cover the syllabus. This, together with the frequent changes of educational policies, especially curriculum, has contributed to the mass failure of candidates in external examinations (Aboderin, 2012).

Obanya, who is the renowned educationist and WAEC examiner looked beyond WAEC results, saying there could be no examination failure without education failure and, of course, system failure. He again is of the opinion that most students fail examinations because they were never taught anything while in school. As he puts it: “In Nigeria, we teach without teachers. 80 per cent of those who enrolled in Faculty of Education in our universities never had the interest to teach after graduating. We have people who are not competent as teachers but we engage them because they flaunt certificates” (Awosiyan & Idoko, 2012). The opinion is emphatically supported by a one-time registrar of the University of Ibadan, Chief Moji Ladipo, on a radio programme that most of the students studying education

courses in the Faculty of Education in the institution are not happy to be there. According to her, most of them are those who failed to make the required scores that could make them to be admitted for courses such as medicine, engineering, law, communication and language arts etc. What this translates to is that the nation is producing frustrated and disinterested teachers for her schools, whereas, the scores for admittance to courses of study in the faculty of education should rank among the highest. The rejected applicants of other faculties and departments are being sent for training at the education faculty, the effect of which is the poor service delivery. This was further concurred by the response of anonymous students of the same faculty who said they opted for education because they failed to gain admission to study their dream courses (Olukunle, 2010).

The attitude of teachers to work also came under criticism, 3.7 % agreed that teachers attitude is also a contributory factor to the issue at stake which then suggests the logical argument which is obvious that a disgruntled student of education will become a disgruntled teacher. Sowemimo's report in (Olunkunle, 2010) who, until recently, was also WAEC examiner in English language lamented that most of the candidates fail English language examination due to poor preparation. "I believe that their teachers do not give them good teaching as evident in the performances of the candidates. "Most of them don't understand the comprehension passages given to them in WAEC examination; the oral English and summary aspects are the worst, and this shows that teachers who teach them are not good in these areas as well." He regretted that there is no more commitment in teaching. Another teacher of English said that, "only 30 per cent of students who sit for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) pass very well in oral test while most of them cannot construct a simple sentence correctly". He further attributed the failure to lack of necessary textbook on Oral English. He said, "Because oral English was introduced lately to the syllabus, some teachers cannot adequately teach it the way it should be taught." According to this teacher, essay writing is another area of difficult which contributes to students' failure; this is to support the fact that only a student who is good in grammar aspect can write good composition (Olukunle, 2010). In this same report, said a staff is of the opinion that the quality of teachers will determine the quality of the students they teach. He further stated that a good teacher must be able to simplify every aspect of the language for his students to perform excellently. This therefore, challenges English teachers' method of teaching.

### ***Parents***

Also in table 2 parents came under the search light with 7.4 % of the responses opining that they are one among the factors militating against the students' attainment in the senior certificate examination. There was a time when parents encouraged teachers to whip deviant students to fall in line; when a teacher was akin to the District Officer of the colonial period or cleric of the orthodox church.

ches, who was highly revered and not necessarily feared by students. Gone is that period, when parents made conscious efforts to scrutinize children's books to assess their performances in school and subtly caution them over lapses. Rather, parents have abandoned these and other primary roles to maids or completely ignored that they have a greater stake in molding the character of their wards (Eze, 2011).

Many parents have lost the control of their children as it is the children that dictate what goes on in the family. Among the many reasons are: overindulgence in social website interactions like Face book and browsing the internet; watching international football leagues, ease of access to movie channels like Africa Magic as well as watching of movies without control by parents (Oyinlola & Ofoelue 2011).

In another finding, Ijaw Monitoring Group (2010) reported that it has also been a matter of concern that parents in some circumstances promoted examination malpractice instead of devoting time to instill the value of hard work in their children. This is further supported by 4.4 % of the teachers' opinion in table 2 above. Additionally today, parents personally look for 'special centres' where they can manipulate the process of their wards' writing their examination. Such bad parental influence tends to encourage them to substitute hard work and honesty with sleaze and self-delusion (Eze, 2011). Also, Aliu said, "At home, there is no back up or monitoring of what pupils do in schools. Parents don't have time for their children. Parents and their children leave the bulk of work on the teachers. So parents expect teachers to perform magic on their children, which is not possible" (Ijaw Monitoring Group, 2010).

## Conclusion

Bello in Awosiyan and Idoko (2012) said, "Nigeria alone records 80 per cent of the population of candidates who sit for the examination and pays 50 per cent of the funding of the council, but it is worrisome that the overall analysis of performance does not favor the country. This she further elaborated that it is due to bad education system which was not different from Prof. Pius Augustine Ike Obanya's hypothesis. The renowned educationist and WAEC examiner looked beyond WAEC results, saying there could be no examination failure without education failure and, of course, system failure.

By virtue of being the most populous nation in African, there has been a rapid growth in the population from the last statistics of July 2012, estimated at 170,123,740 (CIA World Factbook, 2013). By implications there are probably more students in the Nigerian secondary schools than most African countries. The government's frustration can be noted as presented in the result of this pilot study;

this could be in regards to the huge funding expended annually but without favorable outcomes. Instead of succeeding in passing this compulsory public examination to facilitate admission into higher institutions, rather it is always the tale of woes year in year out. The implication here is that by population alone, Nigeria's failing students can be a country unto themselves. Therefore, the government is indeed faced with a challenging task of controlling a country filled with frustrated youths and thereby an education system failure.

Additionally, students' attitude to English language has been greatly affected by their personal negative antecedents; societal values placed on the senior secondary students' performance at the certificate examination. Their lack of seriousness to study and specifically English language is again seen in some youths' craving for pleasures, indulgence in internet sessions like face book, movies and quick money syndrome in the society even without attaining any or little educational qualification. Also, literature and result observed that mobile phones are another form of distraction to students' concentration in class while teaching is going on.

In conclusion, Nigerian Policy on Education (2004: 18) states the broad goals of secondary education as preparing individuals for: "(a) useful living within the society; and (b) higher education". Comparing these goals and the persistent failure of senior secondary school students over the last decades reviewed in the literature and the results from the pilot study presented in this paper, all heads should be put together to find a way(s) forward.

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