

## POLICY AND DISCREPANCY AMONG TECHNICAL STUDENTS IN TAKING WAEC, NECO AND NABTEB EXAMINATION IN UNITY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*In the conventional secondary schools, students are expected at the end of their studies to write both WAEC and NECO, and these certificates are wishfully accepted for admission into tertiary institution. On the other hand, students in the Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) practices a kind of discrepancy examinations. The science students are expected to write WAEC, NECO and NABTEB. But their technical and Business counterparts are often excluded from WAEC thereby limiting their chances of gaining admission in the universities. This paper looks at the policy issue confronting this discrepancy policy and way of minimizing the effects.*

**Key words:** Discrepancy, NABTEB, NECO, Policy and WAEC.

### **Introduction**

The need for qualified middle level technical skills in the country necessitated the establishment of the Federal Technical and Science Colleges in Nigeria. These colleges had the mandate for the training of lower level manpower needs, for technical personnel's to man their establishments (Uso; 2004). The Unity Schools were also established to foster unity after the civil war of 1967-1970. The Federal Science and Technical colleges are established to serve as pathway for students willing to undertake technical engineering and science courses in the nation's universities. At the end of their students' pursuit in the Federal Science and Technical Colleges, they are exposed to several examinations to test the efficiency and also a pathway for higher education (Akpan & Fred, 2015). There are several examination boards that students in the Federal Science and Technical Colleges are expected to undertake. They include the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC), the National Examination Council (NECO) and the National Business for Technical and Examination Board (NABTEB).

The West African Examination Council (WAEC) is a West Pan Examination body established by statutory laws for the conduct of internal and external examinations for school candidates and private candidates respectively (Jones, 2012). The WAEC has its headquarters at Accra in Ghana and Lagos in Nigeria. It has national headquarters in the Nation's capital of the English speaking West African Countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Gambia and Nigeria. According to Ellis (2015), the WAEC pride itself as the most credible examination body in the West African Sub-region. According to Barke (2017), recently, the WAEC have been subjected to credibility test where persons have opened up that they cheated during their examination or getting certified for subjects they are not competent. These has brought the credibility of the WAEC to open scrutiny.

After the WAEC, is the National Examination Council (NECO) which was established in the year 1998 (Okpara, 2015). The NECO is an indigenous examination body that is headquartered in Benin, Edo state, Nigeria. The body was established to provide a perfect competition with WAEC and break the WAEC monopoly which was seen in the rate of failures in WAEC results which partly were as a result WAEC negligence and high-handedness. In secondary schools in Nigeria, students are expected to sit for both WAEC and NECO examinations that usually takes place in May/June, and June/July respectively for both examination bodies. After the NECO, a body was established specifically for the testing of students' academic performance in core business and technical subjects specifically taught at the technical subjects. The body for such examination is the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB). The NABTEB was specifically established for testing the skills, attitudes and values of students at the technical and vocational schools.

According to the policy thrust of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN; 1999), secondary school finalist are expected to register and sit for the WAEC and optional NECO. The technical school finalists were also expected to register and sit for only the NABTEB. In Federal Science and Technical Colleges, nationwide, the policy has been that the Science students can write WAEC and NECO while the Business and Technical students are expected to writes NECO and NABTEB without taking WAEC. This controversy becomes the main issue of this paper.

S/No.	WAEC SUBJECTS	NECO SUBJECTS	NABTEB SUBJECTS/COMBINATION
1	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
2	English	English	English
3	Chemistry	Chemistry	Chemistry
4	Physics	Physics	Physics
5	Economics	Economics	Economics
6	Technical drawing	Commerce	Commerce
7	Integrated Science	Marketing	Marketing
8	Leather Work	Tourism	Tourism
9	Social Studies	Office practice	Office practice
10	Textile	Literature in English	Literature in English
11	Sculpture	Further Mathematics	Agricultural Equipment & implement mechanic works
12	Building Construction	Physical Education	Financial Accounting
13	Music	Hausa	Plumbing & Pipe Fitting
14	Physical Education	Igbo	Textile Trades
15	Economics	Yoruba	Leather Trades
16	Agricultural Science	Store Management	Printing Craft Practice
17	History	Islamic Studies	Garment Making
18	Literature in English	Health Education	Wood work
19	Metal work	Technical Drawing	Biology
20	Home management	Building Construction	Refrigeration & Air-Conditioning works

21	Visual Art	Government	Applied maintenance & Repairs
22	Electronics	Food & Nutrition	Vehicle Body Building
23	Basic Electronics	Financial Accounting	Marine Engineering Craft
24	Foods & Nutrition	Basic Electricity	Fabrication & Welding
25	Health Education	Home Management	Applied Maintenance & Repairs
26	Health Science	Air Conditioning and Refrigeration	Vehicle Body Building
27	Financial Accounting	Electrical Installation & Maintenance Work	Marine Engineering Craft
28	Technical Drawing	Blocklaying, Bricklaying & concrete work	Blocking, Bricklaying & Concreting
29	Science (Core)	Machine woodworking	Photographic Practice
30	Civic Education	Carpentry & joinery	Carpentry & Joinery
31	Computer Studies	Upholstery	Painting & Decorating
32	Hausa	Stenography	Draughtsmanship
33	Igbo	Animal husbandry	Commerce
34	Yoruba	Fisheries	Building/Engineering Drawing
35	Plumbing & Pipe Fitting	Christian Religious Studies	Salesmanship
36	Printing Craft Practice	Catering craft practice	Basic Electricity
37	Machine Wood Working	Clothing & Textile	Computer Craft Studies
38	Stenography	Auto Parts Merchandising	Electronic Work
39	Cosmetology	Radio Television & Electronic	Metal Work
40	Block Laying, Bricklaying & concrete works	Garment Making	Machine wood working
41	Catering Craft Practice	Cosmetology	Agricultural sciences
42	Carpentry & Joinery	Mining	Graphic Arts
43	Tourism	Data Processing	Instrument Mechanic Works
44	GSM Phone Maintenance and Repair	GSM Maintenance & Repairs	Fisheries
45	Marketing	Biology	Ceramic
46	Mining	Building Construction	Mechanical Engineering craft Practice

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47	Bookkeeping	History	Animal science
48	Storekeeping	French	Electrical Installation and Maintenance works
49	Salesmanship	Civic education	Motor vehicle mechanic work
50	Leather, goods manufacturing and repairs	Basic Electricity	Catering craft practice
51	Upholstery	Computer Studies	Automobile electrical work
52	Auto Electrical works	Geography	Furniture making
53	Air Conditioning & Refrigeration	Wood work	Cosmetology
54	Auto Body Repairs and spray painting	Agricultural science	Light Vehicle Body Repair works
55	Garment making	Insurance	Geography
56	Painting and Decorating	Auto Body Repair & spray painting	Foundry craft practice
57	Dying and Bleaching	Auto mechanic work	Building construction
58	Furniture making	Welding & fabrication engineering craft practice	Information & Communication Technology (ICT)
59	Automobile part merchandising	Painting & Decorating	Civic education
60	Data processing	Plumbing & Pipe fitting	Further Mathematics
61	Radio Television & electronic works	Tourism	Christian religious Studies
62	Welding & fabrication Engineering craft practice	Store keeping	Islamic Studies
63	Photography	Book keeping	Basic electricity
64	Auto mechanical work	Salesmanship	Building/ Engineering drawing
65	Electrical installation and maintenance work	Furniture making	Government
66	Fisheries	Office practice	Ship Building Craft Practice
67	Animal husbandry	Auto mechanic	
68	Insurance	Visual art	
69	Store management	Music	
70	Office practice	Arabic	
71	Commerce	Metal work	
72	Christian Religious Knowledge	Data processing	
73	Islamic knowledge		
74	Government		
75	French		

<b>Course of Study</b>	Engineering or Business Education	Engineering or Business Education	Engineering or Business Education
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## Statement of the Problem

Apart from certification which is the bedrock of Nigerian educational system, impartation of skills, attitudes and values to the students of the upper-basic educational level is very important. But certification becomes a prove that a certain level of competency have been achieved during the educational settings. Too much emphasis on certification rather than physical competencies may be one of the reasons for the industrial backwardness of this country. It is quite erroneously believed that without certificates, one cannot be employed or take up leadership positions in Nigeria. In fact, for an individual to be considered for admissions into a higher institution, his/her certificates must be readily available. This goes to emphasize the need or imperative for certificate in Nigeria. In the secondary school setting, students are expected to register and sit for two (2) external examination bodies, the WAEC and NECO. This gives the students more opportunity to either use one or both, or combine results with the two certificates.

In the Federal Science and Technical colleges, non technical (Science) students are expected as a matter of policy to undertake WAEC, NECO and NABTEB as the case may be thereby giving them more opportunities for admission, job placement and eventual political appointment than their technical and Business colleagues who are subjected as a matter of policy sit and writes NABTEB and NECO. The difference is that NABTEB tends to be more practical and Vocational in Nature, preparing the students to the world of work while NECO is more theoretical and elitist in nature together with WAEC hereby limiting their chances for admission, job placement and political appointments. It is against this backdrop that their dichotomy on extend examination undertaken by these students was studied by the researcher to understand the cause and effect and try to strike a balance in order to put forward a possible suggestions.

## Technical Students

The Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) were established basically to address the deficiency in the manpower needs of industries in the country at the time of its establishment (Uranta; 2013). These schools were mandated as a matter of urgency to inculcate skills, attitudes and values. The Government policy of establishing Technical colleges is for NABTEB students to attend Polytechnic. A student might decide to have both WAEC and NABTEB because by getting this certificate, it is quite sure that the student admission possibility will be broadened, other than been limited to polytechnic education which the student might not desire that much. According to sandy (2011), the specialized technical students are trained to become engineers or technologist in the future. The curriculum of this group of students is filled with manipulative and cognitive skills which is quite reflective of what is expected in the industry (Ezechi; 2004).

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2003), suggested the demonstration method of teaching the technical students. According to National Policy on Education (FGN; 2003) graduates of the technical education can be self employed because they are exposed to the core practical's of the industry. Based on this foregoing, there are expected as a matter of policy to write the NABTEB that was established for them.

## Business Students

Another set of students in the Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) is the Business Education students. These sets of students are exposed to the Vocational Business Education curriculum at the upper basic level of education. This class of students according to Bassey and Ido (2015) are exposed to the rudiments of Accounting, Commerce, Marketing, Office Practices, Shorthand etc.

According to the National Policy on Education FGN (2003), the function or purpose of the Business Education is to expose the students to the intricated world of businesses in terms of financial transactions, communication, marketing, etc. Students are expected to be entrepreneur and employer of labour. Most of the graduates are up pursuing a degree in Business related courses. Business students are exposed to soft skills, attitudes and values that can be used to transformed collapsed business students who are expected by the policy to undertake, register and sit for WAEC, NECO and NABTEB.

## Science Students

Another group of students in the Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) are the pure science students just like their counterpart in the conventional secondary schools this class of students are exposed to the fundamentals of the basic sciences, which include Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Further mathematics etc (Bryan; 2009).

These students are usually exposed to core experiments that are usually conducted in the laboratory with their full regiments. According to Ekpe (2012), these sets of students are usually expected to be Medical Doctors of this world and the core scientists often found in the faculties/colleges of Sciences in our universities. As a matter of policy, the science students are expected to sit and write for WAEC and NECO.

## Analysis of the Issue; A Critical Look at the Issue and It Implications

As a matter of policy, Technical students nationwide according to Bricks (2018) are expected to write NABTEB since it meets with the peculiarity of the skills and attitudes of the technical students. This is not an issue, the issue with this policy is that if not all, most of the departments in the universities do not need NABTEB for admission. According to the Joint and Matriculation Board (JAMB) Brochure (2019), admissions for Engineering and Business Faculties all requires a certificate in WAEC or NECO as entry requirements for admissions. This becomes a great bone of contention for the policy maker. This NABTEB is only accepted in the departments of Vocational Education and Technical in most cases. So what happened to the technical graduates with only NABTEB certificates?

This question requires that the policy makers need to ensure that the policy is aligned with JAMB requirements as such, imposing WAEC on the same wavelength with NABTEB or as a substitute would go a long way in ensuring that the NABTEB is accepted. The Business graduates from Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) are also given an option because they are expected to write WAEC, NECO and NABTEB. According to Patrick 2020,

“our new principal came and instructed that from our set, technical and Business students won't be writing WAEC. We are to write only NECO and NABTEB. I had to register for WAEC elsewhere in order to broaden my chances of gaining admission. Today, I have my WAEC, NECO and NABTEB certificates in Business”.

It can be seen that recently, Business and technical students of Federal Science and Technical Colleges (FSTC) are now expected to write only NECO and NABTEB unlike their counterparts. This is quite worrisome as it limits the student's chances of gaining admissions into the University.

The problem is so critical that most parents had to enroll their wards in the conventional secondary schools to register and sit for WAEC in order to increase their chances of getting admitted into the universities. For the policy to be effectively implemented a synergy should be sought after from the universities. Polytechnics in Nigeria do usually accept the NABTEB as a veritable certificate to be used in admission processes, so by this arrangement, NABTEB students are meant for polytechnic Education. It is quite unfortunate as noticed by John (2015) that most students do not wish or desire to attend polytechnic because of the discrepancies in the civil service.

**The problem is shown in the diagram below:**

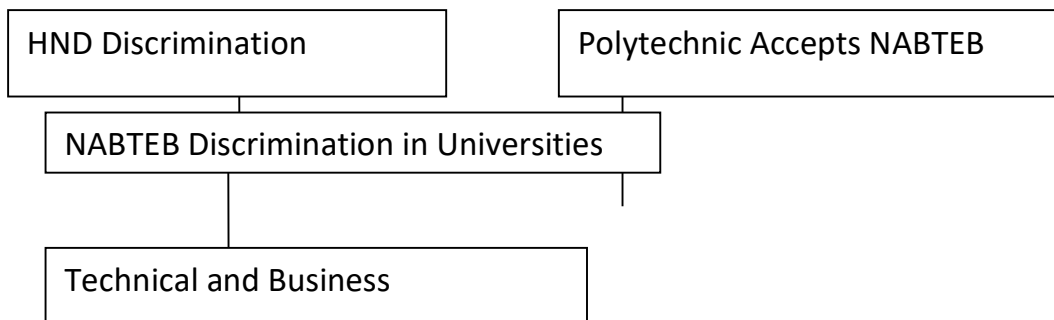


Figure 1; problems faced with Technical and Business Students in FSTC.

### Perceived Reason for Students Taking NABTEB Instead of WAEC

The following are the researcher perceived reasons for Federal Science and Technical College students taking NABTEB instead of WEAC. Since they are perceived, they can be disputed.

1. Clash of Time Table  
Young and Basse (2019) opined that most times both WAEC and NABTEB time table clashes thereby giving the technical students little or no time to choose which of the examination to enroll and write.
2. Political Undertone  
Since NABTEB is indigenous, most policy makers due to cheer political reasons may opt for NABTEB to be taken to fulfill their reach political egos. This problem is often witnessed in the entire Nigeria system.
3. Peculiarities of the NABTEB

Since the WAEC is too theoretical (bookish), the NABTEB tends to be practical in nature and tends to tackle the peculiarities of the skill needs of the technical students which is usually adopted.

## Suggestions

The following are suggestions brought by the researchers;

1. The federal government should as a matter of urgency call for educational roundtable, to discuss this problem of NABTEB as it affects the future of the students.
2. There is need for WAEC and NABTEB to collaborate and adjust their time table to cater for students who may wish to take both WAEC and NABTEB.
3. The National Universities Commission (NUC) should try and ensure that the core Engineering and Business faculties accept NABTEB for admission.
4. The Federal Government through the Ministry of Information and Education should sensitize and enlighten the public on the need for NABTEB in Nigeria educational system. Most people see NABTEB as second class.
5. Finally, the Federal Government should make it mandatory that every student writes WAEC, NECO and NABTEB at the end of their stay in secondary school.

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