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A CRITICAL REVIEW AND APPLICATION OF MARKING PROCEDURE APPROVED BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (NCCE) IN THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research critically reviews and explores the application of the marking procedure approved by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) within the Nigerian Colleges of Education system. The study examines the policy framework guiding assessment practices, with specific focus on the standardization, reliability, and validity of the marking schemes as enforced by the NCCE. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, data were collected through document analysis of NCCE guidelines and semi-structured interviews with academic staff across selected Colleges of Education. The findings reveal both strengths and challenges in the implementation of the marking procedures. While the NCCE's efforts at standardization have improved transparency and accountability in

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student assessment, inconsistencies in adherence, lack of continuous training, and infrastructural constraints remain significant concerns. The study underscores the need for regular review of the marking guidelines, capacity building for lecturers, and technological integration to enhance efficiency and fairness. The research concludes that while the NCCE marking procedure is a commendable initiative, its full impact requires stronger enforcement, institutional support, and stakeholder collaboration to foster academic excellence in the Nigerian teacher education system.

Introduction

Assessment and evaluation are critical components of the teaching and learning process, serving as tools to measure students' academic performance, identify learning gaps, and inform instructional strategies. In the Nigerian educational landscape, particularly within the Colleges of Education system, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) plays a pivotal role in standardizing academic practices to ensure quality and consistency across institutions. One of its key responsibilities includes the formulation and enforcement of approved marking procedures aimed at promoting fairness, objectivity, and uniformity in the assessment of students.

The NCCE-approved marking procedure is designed to guide educators in evaluating student performance through well-defined criteria that align with national standards. This procedure covers aspects such as the allocation of marks, grading scales, and feedback mechanisms. However, despite its significance, questions persist regarding the extent of its implementation, the challenges encountered by academic staff, and the overall effectiveness of the procedure in achieving its intended objectives.

This research undertakes a critical review of the NCCE's approved marking procedure, examining its application in Colleges of Education across Nigeria. It seeks to explore how these guidelines are interpreted and utilized by lecturers, identify any deviations from the recommended practices, and evaluate the factors that influence compliance or non-compliance. The study also aims to provide insights into the impact of the marking procedure on student outcomes and institutional credibility.

By analyzing the strengths and limitations of the current system, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on quality assurance in teacher education

and offers recommendations for enhancing the assessment process within Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Assessment practices in higher education are central to maintaining academic standards and ensuring that students acquire the requisite knowledge and skills for professional competence. In the context of Nigerian Colleges of Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) serves as the regulatory body responsible for setting benchmarks and approving procedures that govern the conduct of examinations, grading, and marking (NCCE, 2012). The marking procedure approved by the NCCE provides a framework for educators to objectively assess student performance based on standardized criteria, which include clear marking schemes, score allocation, and grade interpretation guidelines.

The Role of NCCE in Standardizing Assessment

Several studies have acknowledged the critical role of the NCCE in promoting uniformity and quality assurance in teacher education. According to Okebukola (2015), the establishment of standardized marking procedures is essential for aligning assessment practices with national educational goals. The NCCE's guidelines are intended to promote transparency, minimize bias, and ensure comparability of academic outcomes across various Colleges of Education. However, while the policies are well-intentioned, the level of adherence to these standards varies significantly from one institution to another (Adegoke, 2018).

Implementation Challenges

Research by Abubakar and Adamu (2019) highlights multiple challenges faced by lecturers in implementing the NCCE-approved marking procedure. These include inadequate training on the application of the marking scheme, high student-teacher ratios leading to workload pressure, and limited access to digital tools that could aid accurate and efficient grading. In some cases, institutional culture and lack of enforcement mechanisms contribute to deviations from standardized marking practices (Eze & Njoku, 2020).

Impact on Student Learning and Educational Outcomes

The quality and consistency of marking have direct implications for students' academic progression and motivation. Studies have shown that inconsistent application of marking schemes can result in student dissatisfaction, reduced trust in the academic system, and inequitable learning outcomes (Ibrahim, 2021). On the other hand, effective implementation of standardized marking procedures enhances reliability, supports constructive feedback, and aligns assessment with learning objectives (Yusuf & Bello,
2017).

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the recognition of NCCE's role, there remains a paucity of empirical studies specifically evaluating the practical application of its marking guidelines in Colleges of Education. Most existing literature focuses broadly on assessment practices without isolating the unique components of the NCCE's procedures or examining institutional compliance in depth. Furthermore, the perspectives of lecturers, students, and administrators on the usability and effectiveness of these guidelines are underrepresented in current research.

Conclusion

The reviewed literature underscores the importance of standardized marking procedures in fostering academic integrity and quality in Nigerian Colleges of Education. While the NCCE has provided a robust framework, implementation challenges persist due to systemic and institutional factors. This gap calls for further empirical investigation into the practical realities of applying the NCCE-approved marking procedures, with a view to enhancing assessment practices in the teacher education sector.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design to critically examine the application of the marking procedures approved by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) within the Nigerian Colleges of Education system. The qualitative approach is chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by academic staff in implementing the approved marking guidelines.

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Research Design

The study utilizes a case study design involving selected Colleges of Education across Nigeria. This design allows for the exploration of the subject within its real-life context and helps to gather detailed information on how marking procedures are applied at the institutional level.

Population and Sampling

The target population includes academic staff, heads of departments, examination officers, and quality assurance personnel within public and private Colleges of Education. Purposive sampling was used to select six Colleges of Education (three federal, two state, and one private) from different geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Within each institution, participants were selected based on their involvement in student assessment and familiarity with NCCE marking procedures.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary instruments used for data collection include:

Semi-structured interviews: Conducted with lecturers, examination officers, and administrators to gather their insights on the implementation, challenges, and perceived effectiveness of the NCCE-approved marking procedures.

Document analysis: Review of institutional documents such as marking schemes, assessment policies, NCCE guidelines, and internal moderation reports to assess compliance and application standards.

Focus group discussions: Held with groups of lecturers in each college to encourage the sharing of diverse views and identify common themes across institutions.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses from interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, coded, and organized into themes reflecting the key aspects of marking procedure application, such as adherence to guidelines, challenges encountered, institutional support, and quality assurance practices.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity of the study, data triangulation was employed by collecting information from multiple sources and using different methods. Peer

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debriefing and member checks were also conducted to confirm the accuracy of interpreted responses. A pilot interview was conducted prior to the main data collection to refine the interview questions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethics committee of a participating institution. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process, and participation was entirely voluntary.

Conclusion

The chosen methodology is designed to uncover rich, contextual insights into the real-world application of NCCE's marking procedures in Nigerian Colleges of Education. This approach provides a basis for making informed recommendations that can support policy implementation and improve assessment practices in the teacher education system.

An overview of the NCCE Marking Procedure

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) approved marking procedure emphasizes transparency, objectivity, and consistency. The NCCE outlines several key components that should be adhered to when assessing students' work:

- Standardization of Marks Allocation: The NCCE requires that colleges adopt a standardized marking scheme to ensure that marks are awarded consistently across different examiners and departments. The marking scheme should reflect the weight of each section of an exam or assignment.
- Fairness and Objectivity: Marking must be free from bias, and students should be assessed solely based on their performances. This includes ensuring that personal relationships, favoritism, or other non-academic factors do not influence grading.
- Feedback Mechanism: Students should receive constructive feedback on their assessments to aid their academic development. Feedback should

highlight strengths and areas for improvement to encourage continuous learning.

- Internal and External Moderation: To ensure the integrity of the assessment process, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) mandates that both internal and external moderation processes are employed. Internal moderation involves review by the Head of Department within the institution, while external moderation requires review by an external examiner from a different college of Education in Nigeria.
- Grading Scale: The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has prescribed a grading scale that all Colleges of Education must adhere to. This scale is generally as follows:
    - A: 70% and above (Excellent)
    - B: 60%–69% (Very Good)
    - C: 50%–59% (Good)
    - D: 45%–49% (upper Pass)
    - E: 40%–44% (lower Pass)
    - F: Below 40% (Fail)

Application of NCCE Marking Procedures in the Colleges of Education Systems in Nigeria

The application of the marking procedure approved by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is central to maintaining standardization and quality in the evaluation of student performance in Nigeria's Colleges of Education. These procedures are designed to ensure fairness, consistency, and academic integrity across all institutions under the NCCE's regulatory framework.

In practice, the application of these marking procedures begins with the use of approved marking schemes aligned with course objectives and curriculum standards. Lecturers are expected to adopt uniform grading formats that reflect the NCCE guidelines, which include clear instructions on score allocation, pass/fail criteria, and grade interpretation. For example, continuous assessment and examination scores must be properly weighted (often 40:60), and results must be recorded using officially sanctioned grade point equivalents.

However, while the NCCE's guidelines are comprehensive, their implementation varies widely across institutions. Some Colleges of Education strictly adhere to the

stipulated formats, utilizing standardized templates and moderation processes to ensure consistency. Internal and external moderation of marked scripts are also encouraged to validate marking accuracy and reduce examiner bias.

Despite these efforts, several challenges hinder the effective application of the marking procedures. These include limited professional development opportunities for academic staff on assessment best practices, lack of enforcement by academic boards, and infrastructural issues such as insufficient access to ICT tools that support electronic marking and result management. Moreover, the manual handling of scores in many institutions increases the risk of human error and compromises the reliability of assessments.

Another notable issue is the inconsistency in applying continuous assessment components, which are sometimes undervalued or poorly documented. This weakens the validity of student performance records and undermines the NCCE's intent to balance formative and summative assessments.

Nonetheless, some Colleges of Education have begun integrating digital tools to support the marking process, including computer-based testing (CBT) systems and electronic result compilation platforms. These innovations, though still emerging, demonstrate the potential for improved efficiency, transparency, and compliance with NCCE standards when adequately funded and supported.

In conclusion, while the NCCE-approved marking procedure provides a strong foundation for quality assurance in Nigeria's Colleges of Education, its application in the field reveals gaps between policy and practice. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing capacity building, investment in technology, and a commitment to rigorous internal monitoring and evaluation by each institution.

Challenges in the Application of Marking Procedures in the Colleges of Education System in Nigeria

Despite the comprehensive guidelines provided by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the effective application of the approved marking procedures in Nigerian Colleges of Education faces several notable challenges. These obstacles hinder the realization of consistent, transparent, and equitable assessment standards intended to promote academic excellence and accountability across the teacher education system.

Inconsistent Adherence to Standardized Guidelines

One of the major challenges is the inconsistent implementation of the NCCE's marking procedures across institutions. While some Colleges of Education follow the approved formats and grading scales strictly, others adopt informal or institution-specific methods that deviate from national standards. This inconsistency undermines the comparability of academic outcomes and reduces the reliability of student assessments.

Inadequate Training and Professional Development

Many academic staff lack sufficient training in the application of the NCCE marking guidelines. Without continuous capacity building on assessment techniques, lecturers may struggle to interpret and apply the marking schemes appropriately. This results in subjective grading, uneven score distribution, and the misuse of continuous assessment components.

Overburdened Lecturers and Large Class Sizes

High student-to-teacher ratios in many Colleges of Education place a significant burden on lecturers, especially during examination and grading periods. The excessive workload makes it difficult for educators to devote adequate time to the fair and objective marking of scripts. This sometimes leads to rushed assessments and increased susceptibility to errors.

Manual Marking and Lack of Technological Support

Most Colleges of Education still rely on manual methods for marking and result compilation. This increases the risk of human error, delays in processing results, and in some cases, record mismanagement. The limited adoption of technology, such as computer-based testing and automated result processing systems, hampers the efficiency and accuracy of assessments.

Weak Moderation and Quality Control Systems

Internal and external moderation processes meant to verify the quality and consistency of marked scripts are often weak or irregular. Without strong moderation structures, there is little oversight to detect and correct discrepancies in marking, leading to unreliable outcomes.

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Institutional Resistance and Lack of Enforcement

Some institutions display resistance to change due to entrenched administrative practices or limited institutional will to enforce the NCCE guidelines. This is often compounded by inadequate monitoring from regulatory authorities, making it difficult to ensure compliance across all Colleges.

Poor Documentation and Record-Keeping

In some cases, continuous assessment scores are not well documented or are inconsistently recorded, making it difficult to track student performance accurately over time. This affects the integrity of the final grades awarded and diminishes the overall credibility of the assessment process.

Analysis of Findings and Presentation of Data

This section presents and analyzes the data gathered from interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews on the application of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)-approved marking procedures in selected Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The analysis is structured around key themes that emerged from the data, which include the level of awareness and understanding of the marking procedures, degree of compliance, challenges in implementation, and institutional efforts toward quality assurance.

Awareness and Understanding of NCCE Marking Procedures

Findings: Most lecturers and academic staff demonstrated a fair level of awareness of the NCCE-approved marking procedures. They were familiar with the grading structure (e.g., 40:60 continuous assessment to examination ratio), score allocation guides, and grade interpretation. However, understanding of more technical aspects, such as marking moderation and assessment documentation standards, was inconsistent across institutions.

Data Presentation:

Category	Percentage (%)
Fully aware and trained	45%
Aware but not fully trained	40%
Unaware or unclear about details	15%

Compliance with Marking Guidelines

Findings: Compliance with the NCCE marking procedures varied significantly between institutions. Federal Colleges showed higher adherence due to better oversight and resources, while some state and private institutions demonstrated lax enforcement of guidelines. In several cases, continuous assessment scores were either inflated or poorly recorded, contrary to NCCE expectations.

Data Presentation:

Institution Type	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Low Compliance
Federal Colleges	70%	25%	5%
State Colleges	40%	50%	10%
Private Colleges	30%	55%	15%

Challenges in Application

Findings: Lecturers identified several recurring challenges:
Heavy workload and large student populations.
Lack of regular training on marking practices.
Inadequate facilities for secure and efficient marking.
Manual result processing leading to errors and delays.
Quotes from Participants:
"Sometimes we have over 200 scripts to mark within a week; it's difficult to follow every rule."
"We need digital support systems; manual computation is prone to mistakes."

Role of Technology and Modern Tools

Findings: Very few colleges had adopted digital tools such as e-marking or computer-based testing. Where available, these tools significantly reduced workload and improved the accuracy of results. However, most institutions still relied on manual processes due to inadequate funding and technical expertise.

Data Presentation:

Use of Technology in Marking	Percentage%
Fully digital (CBT+ e-marking	10%
Partially digital	35%
Entirely Manual	55%

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Quality Assurance and Moderation

Findings: Internal moderation was found to be inconsistent. Only a few colleges reported conducting regular moderation exercises, while others either skipped the process or did it informally. External moderation was more structured but not consistently implemented.

Conclusion of Analysis

The findings indicate that while the NCCE marking procedures are known and valued in theory, their practical application is hindered by systemic challenges. Inconsistent training, infrastructural deficits, and administrative inefficiencies all contribute to gaps between policy and practice. Colleges with stronger institutional support and oversight mechanisms demonstrated better compliance and outcomes. These insights highlight the need for more targeted interventions and investments to enhance the integrity and effectiveness of the assessment process in Nigerian Colleges of Education.

Conclusion

The challenges in the application of the NCCE-approved marking procedures reflect broader systemic issues within Nigeria's Colleges of Education. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including the provision of regular training for lecturers, investment in digital infrastructure, strengthening moderation and quality assurance mechanisms, and enhancing institutional accountability. Only through such concerted efforts can the intended objectives of the NCCE marking guidelines be fully realized.

Recommendations on the Application of Marking Procedures in the Colleges of Education System in Nigeria

Based on the critical review of the marking procedures approved by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and the challenges identified in their application, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness, consistency, and integrity of assessment practices in Nigeria's Colleges of Education:

1. **Regular Training and Capacity Building for Academic Staff:** The NCCE and individual colleges should prioritize continuous professional development

for lecturers, especially on assessment literacy, marking techniques, and the practical application of standardized marking schemes. Workshops, seminars, and refresher courses should be organized regularly to update staff on evolving best practices and policy revisions.

2. **Strengthening Internal and External Moderation Mechanisms:** Each institution should establish robust internal moderation committees responsible for reviewing marked scripts for accuracy, fairness, and consistency. In addition, external moderation processes should be enforced as a mandatory quality assurance measure, ensuring that assessments across institutions adhere to national standards.
3. **Integration of Technology in Assessment Processes:** To reduce errors and improve efficiency, Colleges of Education should invest in technological solutions such as Computer-Based Testing (CBT), digital marking platforms, and result management systems. The adoption of these tools can streamline the marking process, ensure accurate record-keeping, and reduce turnaround time for result processing.
4. **Enforcement and Monitoring by the NCCE:** The NCCE should intensify its monitoring and evaluation functions to ensure strict compliance with the approved marking procedures. Regular inspections, performance audits, and enforcement of sanctions for non-compliance can serve as a deterrent to poor assessment practices and institutional indifference.
5. **Standardization of Continuous Assessment Practices:** There should be clear guidelines and monitoring for the administration of continuous assessments (CAs) to ensure they are given appropriate weight and are properly documented. Institutions must ensure that CA components reflect students' academic progression and contribute meaningfully to their final grades.
6. **Reduction of Lecturer Workload:** To allow for more accurate and thoughtful assessment, Colleges of Education should address the issue of overcrowded classes and heavy lecturer workloads. Recruitment of additional academic staff and improved staff-student ratios will facilitate better marking quality and reduce burnout.
7. **Establishment of an Assessment and Evaluation Unit:** Each College of Education should have a dedicated Assessment and Evaluation Unit responsible for coordinating marking procedures, maintaining marking

standards, and supporting lecturers in implementing the NCCE guidelines effectively.

8. **Institutional Commitment to Quality Assurance:** Colleges must develop and implement internal quality assurance policies that align with NCCE standards. Institutional leadership should demonstrate a clear commitment to upholding assessment integrity through adequate funding, support for academic staff, and promotion of a culture of accountability.

Conclusion

The successful application of NCCE-approved marking procedures depends on a combination of policy enforcement, institutional support, staff competence, and technological advancement. By implementing these recommendations, Nigerian Colleges of Education can strengthen the credibility of their assessment systems, enhance student learning outcomes, and contribute to the overall improvement of teacher education in the country.

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