

## **SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE-RELATED FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PERSISTENT EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABIA STATE.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the school administrative-related factors that are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State. The objectives were to determine the prevalence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State, identify the school administrative-related factors that are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State, and assess the solutions proposed for the eradication of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of study was 886 public secondary school principals, 10 head teachers, 80 Subject Heads, 240 teachers, and 1052 SS3 students, making a total of 2468 respondents. The combined sampling technique was used in the sample selection. Two research questions were answered and three null hypotheses tested. The results indicated that examination malpractice is very high in public secondary schools in Abia State. The results also revealed that examination malpractices are caused by inadequate supervision and lack of motivation of the school administrators, peer group influence, and poor school management and administration. The study concluded that effective and timely supervision of examinations and strict adherence to the laid down examination rules will go a long way in preventing examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State. The study recommended that relevant stakeholders should increase awareness of the negative impacts of examination malpractice on the educational system and ensure that the administrators of public secondary schools in Abia State are properly motivated. There should also be stricter supervision of both students and teachers during examinations and at all times.

**Keywords:** Administration, Factors, Persistence and Examination

## Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right which functions to develop the talents of individuals to the fullest. The United Nations International Cultural and Educational Fund, UNICEF (2010) noted that when children of any nation have access to quality education, such a nation could claim to create a ripple effect of opportunity that may impact many generations to come. Formal education is organized into pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education components. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1998:16) in her National Policy on Education defined secondary education as the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. Ogbonnaya (2019) put it as the form of education children receive after they have received primary school education.

Education at all levels and examinations are inseparable, and the importance of examination cannot be over emphasized. Examination according to Webster's Dictionary (2008) refers to an exercise designed to examine progress or test qualification or knowledge. It has remained a potent instrument for judgment of knowledge acquired (Joshua, 2011). It can be deduced that for education to be seen to have taken place, the students who are the recipients of such education are expected to have attained a certain standard through evaluation process. According to Omolabi (2014), examination has been the basic characteristic of the school system all over the world. He emphasized that it can be regarded as a requirement upon which the most important decisions about the progress of the teachers, school administrators and all stakeholders in the educational system are based.

Educational administration is the process by which an administrator directs and controls scarce human and material resources in the

school system in order to achieve the desired goals and objectives (Ezeocha, 2010). Educational administration is also seen as a service, activity or tool through which the fundamental objectives of the education process may be more fully or efficiently realized (Ogbonnaya, 2019). Secondary school administration is faced with several challenges. Adeyemi (2008) identified the existence of inadequate facilities, low staff morale and poor supervision of schools as some of the problems in the secondary school administration in Nigeria. Uwakwe (2017) revealed five more administrative problems which secondary school administration encounters. These include; parental problems, staff problems, district problems, inadequate funding and unstable government policies. Comparing the various administrative problems which secondary school administration encounters, Nwana in Ezeocha (2015) observed that cheating at public examinations is much more prevalent than it is officially reported and accounts for why principals consider it much a threat to school administrators.

In Nigeria, examinations are either internal or public. Internal examinations are the examinations set by teachers in the form of class tests and end of term examinations. Public examinations on the other hand, are examinations that are conducted in the public interest by recognized examining bodies that were not involved in the organizing instruction or preparing students for the examination (Obiakor, 2017).

In defining examination malpractice, attempts have been made by experts to define it from various perspectives. Ike (2016) defined examination malpractice as any action done or committed which makes it impossible to use an examination in determining the level of competence of a candidate in absorbing,

reproducing, and where appropriate, apply the knowledge. This means that any act of wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the role of acceptable practice is tantamount to examination malpractice. Others see examination malpractice as a corrupt practice. This is supported by Olayinka (2013) who defined examination malpractice as a misconduct or improper practice in any examination with a view to obtaining good results through fraudulent action.

According to Oluyeba and Daramola (2017); examination malpractice is an irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the conduct of examination in or outside the examination hall before, during or after such examinations. Ahmed (2013) believed that an examination malpractice is any act of wrong doing or neglect that contravenes the rules of acceptable practices before, during and after an examination by any body in any way. In another light, examination malpractice is seen as the outworking of greed from within an examinee and as influenced from without by corrupt practices and agents with a view to succeeding through crooked means before, during or after examination.

The examination malpractice in West Africa School Certificate Examination (WASCE) christened “Expo” was born into Nigeria in 1970 during W.A.S.C examination (Ezeocha, 1990: 147). According to him, three major types of unethical behaviours usually engaged in by the candidates have been identified. They include illegal use of examination papers, leakage of examination papers, and impersonation at examination. The manifestation and incidences of examination malpractices in Nigeria are obvious.

On the national setting, studies have been conducted on examination malpractices in secondary schools in Nigeria. The problem of examination malpractices in Nigeria seems to be as old as the introduction of formal system

of education (Afigbo, 2013). The first major incidents of examination malpractices occurred when the Senior Cambridge local examinations of 1977, 1981 and 1987 leaked (Olujuwon, 2019). The effects of examination malpractices are enormous as seen below.

The repercussions of examination malpractice thriving in the public secondary schools are enormous not only on the students but also on the larger society. It's obvious that the hope of transforming the nation politically, socially and economically will be threatened when individuals chose to succeed through examination malpractice. Agbu (2019) asserted that the alarming and seemingly endless series of scandalous homes, businesses, society and even religion may not be unconnected with the fact that the first generation of fraudsters who must have perpetrated examination malpractice have come of age and are now in leadership positions. Examination malpractices have consistently remained a venom of Nigerian educational system.

Another adverse effect of examination malpractice is the fate of one who decides to succeed through examination malpractice. It can be said that success achieved through examination malpractice is best described as bad success. This is because according to Agbu (2019), success built on sound moral foundation can endure but success built on fraud are bound to collapse sooner or later. The evil effects of examination malpractice are endless. Creativity and resourcefulness are hampered (Hadiza, 2018). In another light, Ezeocha (1990) went on to add that majority of the certificates obtained by candidates these days to say the least are not merited by their holders. This is bound to produce incompetent graduates who will offer substandard services consequently affecting the lives of the masses. Literature reveals some attempts to stem the occurrence and consequences of examination

malpractice, particularly in Adamawa State; for instance, Abdullahi (2019) observed that in dealing with examination malpractice matters, the fault may not be that of the students alone, but other sources, including educational institutions. Within this context, some institutional attempts have been made to check examination malpractice. For example, Government Day Secondary School in Vunoklang, Girei L.G.A and Government Day Secondary School Damare in Yola South L.G.A both in Abia State were banned as centres for public examination because the Federal Ministry of Education (2007) Examination malpractice Blacklist Report indicted them on examination malpractice.

Recently, in Abia State also, two teachers were dismissed for altering examination results. The school administrator disclosed that the sacked teachers were involved in examination malpractices, a punishable offence (Yinka Heritage 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2012). In another effort to forestall future occurrence of examination malpractice; the federal government promulgated Decree No. 20 of 1984 and later, Decree No. 33 of 1999 which is being enforced by the Abia State government.

Further measures which have been taken in recent times by the Adamawa State government to eradicate examination malpractice is through the implementation of the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) policy document which targets 40% reduction in examination malpractice annually (Udoh, 2018).

Yet, with all these measures examination malpractice still thrives unabated which are strong reasons to believe that the root causes have not been properly identified and addressed, hence the persistent nature of the problem. Within this context, it is suspected that some administrative factors may be

responsible for the persistence of this problem, vis-à-vis, school administrative related factors, invigilator-related factors, and external examination bodies:

### **School administrative-related factors**

Orhungur (2013) decried the general opinion which tends to indict the students and exonerate the teachers and other examination agents. He maintained that if the staff, that is, all who have to do with examinations examiners, typists, custodians, staff of examination bodies, printers, transporters, and security agents-put their house in order, students would not have access to examination materials before examinations. Being particular about supervision or examinations, Obiakor (2017:37) disclosed that in public examinations, most supervisors pay huge sums of money to be appointed as supervisors. For them, examination supervision is a business venture in which the business man has invested so much with aim of making some returns from his investment. He added that some appointments of supervisors go only to favoured persons who are friends or relatives and/or who make regular returns to the officers in charge. Thus, experience ability, integrity, seniority and honesty are jettisoned in the appointments of examination supervisors/invigilators.

Teaching staff have their share of the blame for the persistence of examination malpractice. Anyim (2018) identified non-coverage of prescribed syllabuses due to their extensiveness and the several nonchalant attitudes of teachers towards teaching, mass promotion of students in internal examinations and industrial actions by teachers as other causes of examination malpractice in secondary schools. Umar (2013) indicted head masters and principals as the biggest perpetrators of examination

malpractice in Nigeria. He asserted that secondary school principals are the worst perpetrators of the crime as they, in a bid to have names of their schools praised and recognized, manipulate and aid the crime. In the same vein Ike (2014) of the Examination Ethics Project (EEP) held that principals have gone to the extent of building into the national Examination council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) registration fees, an examination malpractice fees variously referred to as cooperation fees, understanding fees, examination welfare fees, and miscellaneous fees with the sole aim of bribing supervisors and invigilators and whoever sent them so that they might 'cooperate' during examination. Oghonnaya (2019) add that some heads of schools require students to contribute money to give to WAEC invigilators so that they can be given the freedom to indulge in examination malpractice. Poverty and greed according to Udoh (2018) on the part of the teacher who constitute the bulk of invigilators and examiners are other fundamental causes of examination malpractice. Next to staff personnel-related factors that cause examination malpractice is student personnel. Staff personnel-related factors to some extent were seen to cause examination malpractice which agrees with the main purpose of the study; what administrative factors responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State.

The new Webster dictionary (2018) defined student as a scholar, pupil; especially one who attends school. Student personnel-related factors that causes examination malpractice, include; laziness, ill-preparation, socioeconomic status of parent among others. The primary culprits in this menace according to Joshua, Ekpoh, Edet, Joshua and Obo (2019) are the students themselves. Students

are no longer hardworking they have little or no interest in studying to know and studying to face examination on their own, they lack concentration during studies, have poor habits and are generally lazy, and easily distracted by activities in the environment. Seriousness as backed by Oyarekhua (2018) is thrown to the wind by many students. Most of them have little time for their studies. She added that the students spend their time attending parties and forming gangs who engage in untoward behaviours. A study which was carried out by Adeyemi (2010) also revealed that the desire among students to pass examination at all cost constitute to the factor that sustains examination malpractice.

Another factor that influences the students' attitude towards their studies is the general socioeconomic situation in the country. In recent times, students prepare, if at all they do, lackadaisically for examinations. The reason for this lackluster attitude as opined by Thomas Derry of WAEC is that the youths have prioritized entertainment and pleasure at the expense of their books (myspace.fm.com.2004): furthermore, Anger (2014) pointed out that the high fees associated with especially the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) makes malpractice unavoidable as poor students cannot afford to repeat a given examination and would in the first instance do anything to pass it at all cost.

As regards school administrative-related factors, the authority of secondary school principal is viewed both in the position he occupies as well as the functions he performs in school administration. He develops and implements the educational programmes of the school and procures staff. Also, he provides facilities and equipment, keeps schools records in addition to creating a

conducive teaching and learning atmosphere in schools, Ogbonnaya (2019).

The functions that the school administrator performs are summed up by Mgbodile in Ocho (2017) into five main areas, namely; management of instructional programme, staff personnel administration, student personnel administration and finance and physical resource management.

As regards staff of schools administrative factors responsible for examination malpractice, Olujunwon (2019) revealed that inadequate qualified teachers do cause examination malpractice. Asuru (2014) opined that, its not unusual in some cases for final year students, clerks and messengers to be engaged in examination supervision in some schools. These people do not know the techniques of examination supervision, he lamented.

As regards students-personnel administrative factors, Ogbonnaya (2019) has shown that where students are not given adequate disciplinary orientation, they are bound to exhibit in disciplinary tendencies in any available situation. El-Rufai (2016) corroborated this observation by stating that most secondary school administrators have problem with stern implementation and enforcement of rules and regulations good enough to curtail students' excesses, hence indiscipline continue to thrive in such schools. The present day system of education according to Ogbonnaya (2019), provides opportunity for parents to participate fully in the training of their children at school. Therefore when parents are given a place in the administration of schools in views of PTA Contributions towards the attainment of set educational goals and objectives the more effective it is. Uwakwe (2012) added that there should be more of parental involvement in secondary school administration; after all

it's their children that attend these secondary schools.

### Research Question

The study was guided by the following Research Questions:

What school administrative-related factors are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State?

### Research Hypothesis

The following null Hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study;

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals, teachers, students, and external examination officials on school administrative-related factors responsible for persistent examination malpractice in the public secondary schools in Abia State.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

This research work adopted a descriptive survey design.

The area cover in Abia State of Nigeria. This is because of the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in the state. Abia State consists of seventeen (17) local government areas grouped into three education zones namely,

The target population is four hundred and eighty four thousand two hundred and fifty nine (484, 259) respondents comprising four

hundred and seventy six thousand six hundred and fifty five (476, 655) students, six thousand eight hundred and seventy four (6,874) teachers, six hundred and fifty five (655) principals of public secondary schools (PPSMB, 2012). Fifty five (55) External Examination Officials; Thirty three (33) and twenty two (22) WAEC and NECO Officials respectively (WAEC/NECO, 2013).

The total sample size for the study is 668 respondents. A multistage sampling technique is employed whereby in the first stage, three (3) out of the five (5) education zones in the state will be randomly sampled. In the second stage, two (2) LGAs were sampled from each of the selected education zones giving a total of six (6) LGAs. The third stage involved a proportionate sampling of 12.5% of the number of schools in each of the selected LGAs; this gave a total of 27 schools sampled for the study.

The fourth stage involved the selection of all the principals in the 27 sampled schools. In each of the sampled schools, 1% of the teacher population was sampled; this brought a total number of 81 teachers sampled for the study.

For the study, the SS 3 students served as the key respondent of the student population of the study. 20 students were sampled from each of the schools using a simple random sampling technique. This brought a total number of students sampled for the study to 540.

At the fifth stage, staff of external examination bodies at the state headquarters were sampled

from both WAEC and NECO office whereby ten (10) staff of WAEC and ten (10) staff of NECO were sampled. This gave a total of 20 external examination officials sampled for the study.

A Structured Administrative Factors Sustaining Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (AFSEMQ) composed by the researcher was used for data collection.

Two of the validates were in Educational Administration and Planning in the Department of Educational Foundation while the other validate is an expert in measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Science Education, all from the Faculty of Education, Abia state University .

Cronbach alpha/coefficient was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient 0.89 was obtained for the instrument.

Five research assistants were used by the researcher in the administration and collection of copies of the questionnaire from the respondents through direct delivery.

Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions while ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research question one:** What school administrative-related factors are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State?

**Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on school administrative related factors responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary school.**

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Poor condition of service of principals and teachers result to greed	3.21	0.86	Accepted
2.	Persistent staff strike resulting to poor content coverage	3.35	0.75	Accepted
3.	Poor content coverage by teachers due to laziness.	3.20	0.81	Accepted
4.	School administrators' over expectation from students in terms of high performance in examination.	2.93	0.96	Accepted
5.	Staff involved in examination malpractice in the past are rarely disciplined.	2.94	0.97	Accepted
6.	Lack of the fear of God among staff in their discharge of duties.	3.33	0.80	Accepted
7.	Moral decline among students.	3.30	0.81	Accepted
8.	Students who are ill-equipped for examination tend to take examination malpractice as an option	3.28	0.84	Accepted
9.	Students from wealthy homes influence examiners with their parents' wealth	3.38	0.80	Accepted
10.	Students' fear of failure and lack of self-confidence sustains examination malpractice	3.24	0.83	Accepted
11.	Poor students are likely to indulge in examination malpractice to avoid second payment of high fees associated with SSCE.	3.35	0.81	Accepted
12.	Lack of adequate infrastructure e.g examination Halls, Class rooms and furniture aid the sustenance of examination malpractice	3.20	0.91	Accepted
13.	Advent and use of mobile phones and ICT tools during examinations.	3.26	0.82	Accepted
14.	Lack of electronic devices to check candidates before examinations.	3.14	0.88	Accepted
15.	Poor parents may not be able to provide for their children's facilities at home that aid their learning and this predisposes them to cheating.	3.24	0.84	Accepted

16.	Parents lack good moral orientation for their children.	3.14	0.86	Accepted
17.	Rich parents pay money to influence their children's grades.	3.43	0.75	Accepted
18.	Parents of low economic status are likely to pay people to write external examination for their children to avoid repeating payment of SSCE fees.	3.22	0.87	Accepted
19.	Non-enforcement of laws and rules on examination by government.	3.11	0.92	Accepted
20.	Failure of government at all levels to equip her schools with modern facilities to aid teaching and learning.	3.28	0.89	Accepted
21.	Some state governments require their principals to record certain percentage pass by students in their schools or face sack, demotion or stagnation.	3.05	0.97	Accepted
22.	Lack of constant teachers' training.	3.28	0.82	Accepted
23.	Low parental involvement in school administration.	3.13	0.83	Accepted
24.	Recruitment of incompetent hands to handle administrative affairs.	3.21	0.85	Accepted

Results on table 1 show that all the listed factors related to school administration were agreed upon, because their mean scores exceed the criterion mean score of 2.5. The mean scores range between 2.93 and 3.43 with stand deviation between 0.75 and 0.97. Item number 17 ( $\bar{X} = 3.43$ ) had the highest agreement response while it was closely followed by item number 9 ( $\bar{X} = 3.38$ ). The factor with the least mean score ( $\bar{X} = 2.93$ ) was item number 4.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals, teachers, students, and external examination officials on school administrative-related factors responsible for persistent examination malpractice in the public secondary schools in Abia State.

**Table 2: ANOVA analysis of the comparison of responses of principals, teachers, students and external examination officials on school administrative related factors responsible for the persistent examination malpractice.**

Ho1	Principal		Teachers		Student		Examination officers		F value	Decision
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
	2.96 <sup>a</sup>	0.31	3.01 <sup>a</sup>	0.18	3.26 <sup>b</sup>	0.14	3.21 <sup>b</sup>	0.21	10.42	Sig.

\*Sig.= Significant difference at 0.05, Means with same alphabets means that respondents do not differ significantly from each other from a post-hoc test

Table 2 gives a result of the analysis of variance of whether there is any significant difference in the mean ratings of principals, teachers, students, and external examination officials on school administrative-related factors responsible for persistent examination malpractice in the public secondary schools. The result shows that significant difference exist between the category of respondents' views with an F- value of 10.42 ( $P < 0.05$ ). A further analysis (Post HOC) revealed that although a significant difference exist between the various respondents, the principals and teachers do not differ significantly from each other as students and examination officers do not also differ from each other on school administrative-related factors responsible for persistent examination malpractice in the public secondary schools.

### Summary of Findings

- Poor condition of service of principals and teachers result to greed.
- Rich parents pay money to influence their children's grades.
- Lack of adequate infrastructure e.g. examination halls, classrooms, and furniture aid the sustenance of examination malpractice.
- Recruitment of incompetent personnel to handle administrative affairs sustains the persistence of examination malpractice.

### Summary

It is obvious that certain administrative factors are responsible for the persistent examination malpractices in public secondary schools. The main thrust of the study was to identify the administrative factors that sustain examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State, as well as the measures for addressing them. Specifically, no research

work have been carried out to identify causes and strategies for over coming the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools from the perception of principals, teachers, student and external examination officials in Abia State to the best knowledge of the researcher. This study incorporated the perspectives of these four key education stakeholders, consequently making the study on the administrative factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State expedient and timely. Four research questions were posed and three research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Using the multistage sampling techniques, a total sample of 668 respondents was used where 27 principals, 81 teachers, 540 students and 20 external examination officials in Abia State were selected. An Administrative Factors Sustaining Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (AFSEMQ) was used for data

collection. Mean and standard deviation were employed to answer the research questions while the three research hypotheses were tested statistically using ANOVA. The result indicate that such factors as poor condition of service of principals and teachers resulting to greed; rich parents paying money to influence their children's grades; lack of adequate infrastructure; selection of incompetent invigilators based on favour instead of merit; recruitment of incompetent personnel to handle administrative affairs are significant factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State. It has been recommended in the study that factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Abia State can be overcome when the Federal Government take a frontal attack on corruption; infrastructure are provided in schools; electronic devices employed to check students with intentions to cheat; condition of service of staff are improved and scholarship given to brilliant students from poor economic background. Moreover, suggestions have been made for further studies.

### Conclusions

The war against examination malpractice has hitherto been focusing on withholding of results, banning of schools as centres for public examination, promulgation of decrees among other reactive measures. The aim has been largely to punish offenders in order to deter others from future involvement.

### Implications

The study has the following implications:

- Corruption as a dishonest or illegal behaviour especially of people in

authority give rise to diverse kinds of examination malpractices.

- The effects of poor condition of service and its tendency to cause examination irregularities is better understood by civil servants.
- Poor supervision by external examination bodies results to leakage of question papers.

### Recommendations

From the outcome of this research, the following are recommended:

- Federal Government needs frontal attack on corruption. All lazy and corrupt staff cutting across every tier of governance should be properly sanctioned and there shall be no sacred cows.
- Salaries of staff for both government and external examination bodies should be paid promptly to forestall the desire of being fraudulent.
- Teachers salary scale (TSS) and the minimum wage (MW) should be fully implemented.
- Infrastructure e.g. examination halls, classroom, furniture should be adequately provided by government and every facility needed for effective supervision of examination should be supplied by external examination bodies especially means of transportation.

If the foregoing recommendations are implemented, examination malpractice in Nigeria will be overcome permanent,

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