

**PERCEIVED CAUSES OF MALPRATICE IN PUBLIC  
EXAMINATIONS BY FRESH STUDENTS OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, AKOKA, LAGOS**

*By*

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**Abstract**

*The incidence of examination malpractices in the conduct of public examinations which is becoming rampant, is the problem that prompted this study. The study investigated the factors causing examination malpractices among secondary school students. One hundred subjects were used for the study. Eighty (80) females and twenty (20) males were randomly selected from St. Augustine College of Education, Akoka Lagos. Their ages ranged from 18 to 36 years. Seventy-eight of them attended public secondary schools while twenty-two attended private secondary schools. They responded to the Examination Malpractices in Public Examinations Questionnaire (EMPEQ) developed by the researcher. The predominant factors responsible for malpractices in public examinations conducted by the WAEC and NECO were found to include lack of trained teachers in secondary schools, corrupt WAEC and NECO examination officials and supervisors who allow examination malpractices for money and difficulty in getting admission into tertiary institutions. It was therefore concluded from the results of this study that concerted efforts have to be made at the examination agencies' level to check the action of corrupt officials in order to check examination malpractices which occur in public examinations conducted by NECO and WAEC.*

**Introduction**

Examination malpractice has been defined as all illegal means that students use to pass examinations (S ooze, 2004). Examination malpractice has

become a plague in the Nigerian educational system. Onyechere (2004) noted that it is almost a routine for students to cheat in examinations. Efforts have been made by government and the education authorities to stem its occurrence. Government has gone to the extent of issuing Act 33 of 1999 referred to as Examination Malpractices and Miscellaneous Offences Act to check the malaise. A Non- Governmental Organization, the Examination Ethics Project is currently leading a war against examination malpractice. However the continuous engagement of student in examination malpractices especially in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) SSCE give indication that such efforts have proved ineffective. It is not surprising therefore that many people want not only to have access to education, but to get that certificate awarded at the end of an educational career. This brings us to the issue of evaluation in our educational system. In Nigeria, the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system has continuous assessment system incorporated into it. The continuous assessment system assesses the student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. According to Akpan (1988), it gives sufficient information for students' placement and ameliorates misfits and drop-outs. Where this continuous assessment in the cognitive domain involves knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of the subject matter, assessment in the affective domain covers the personality characteristics of the learner in the area of values and beliefs, attitudes, appreciations, interests, life styles, aspiration, frustration and tolerance levels. Psychomotor domain assessment is concerned with manipulative skills. Psychomotor development is the least assessed in many schools in Nigeria. As a result, many students are not well prepared for examinations. For this evaluation technique to work and meet the yearnings of the Nigerian society, its implementation needs to be pursued with greater vigour.

Adekale (1993) and Omotosho (1990) identified poor preparation for examinations, low morality, poor school facilities as causes of examination malpractices while Ijaiya (1998) found socio-economic factors to be stronger causes than institutional factors. Interaction with students who are products of our secondary schools and who have been exposed to public examinations conducted by the WAEC and NECO reveals that certain factors are responsible for the incidence of examination malpractices in public examinations. These are:

1. Inadequacy of trained teachers.
2. Insufficient teaching facilities in schools.
3. Inadequacy of teaching equipment.
4. Desire to achieve success by all means.
5. Corrupt WAEC and NECO officials and supervisors
6. Difficulty in getting admission into tertiary institutions

The quality of teachers in an educational service determines, to a very large extent, the quality and standard of the educational system. Without good and efficient teachers, the school system would find it extremely difficult to assist the society in realizing its developmental goals as no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers (Ajayi, 1985). It is also true that well-motivated teachers tend to be more efficient than their poorly motivated counterparts (Ejiogu, 1997).

Despite the fact that teaching meets some of the characteristics required of a profession, efforts are now on in Nigeria to professionalise it in a way similar to such other professions as law, medicine and accountancy (Peretonode, 1995). The teaching profession which seems as an all comers' profession still allows many teachers who are not qualified to practice. There is no doubt that this state of affairs would give room for mediocres who are ill-prepared to teach in schools. And of course, the product of their inefficient teaching would be students who are ill-prepared to face the demands of public examinations.

Corrupt officials and supervisors of WAEC and NECO have allowed themselves to be bought with money and so neglect their responsibilities and permit examination malpractices. In addition, students who are too anxious to secure admission to tertiary institutions are ready with the aid of their parents to pay any amount of money to the officials of these agencies. This is so because it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure admission to tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Apart from scoring high in the qualifying Joint 'Admission and Matriculation Board. (JAMB) examination, prospective candidates into tertiary institutions must have five credits at one sitting or two sittings. All these make

success at public examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO a desperate venture for candidates.

Lack of equipment and teaching facilities in schools are indicators that the commitment of Nigerian government to funding education has dwindled considerably. UNESCO has recommended that 26% of the national budget of a country be devoted to education (Ejogu, 1997). While some nations have struggled to increase their yearly budget to enhance quality education for sustainable national development, Nigeria's Federal Government's actual spending on education has fallen from 12.96% in 1995 to 7% in 2001 (Ajala, April 29 2002). This scenario can only result in dwindling standard of education. The conduct of public examinations is very essential to the whole educational system of a country because it affords the system an opportunity to evaluate generally the quality of learning to which the younger generation of our society has been subjected. Besides, the beneficiaries of a particular phase of education are exposed to a common evaluation through public examinations. This helps to give the government and education authorities an idea of the standard of education in the various segments of education service providers (private and public) that comprise a particular sector of the educational system. To have such public examination riddled with examination malpractice is indeed very pathetic. This study therefore sets out to investigate the factors causing examination malpractice in our schools.

### **Research Question**

This study intends to find out what factors are responsible for examination malpractices in the conduct of public examinations by WAEC and NECO?

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. This design was used because the study is out to gather information already existing among the population under study. It aims at identifying the factors causing examination malpractices in public examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO. Adopting the descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to gather the required information or data from the respondents. Simple random sampling technique

was used to select 100 students from the 200 year one students of St. Augustine's College of Education, Akoka, Lagos. These students were sampled because they have all been exposed to public examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO. There were 80 females and 20 males. Seventy-eight of them attended public schools while twenty-two attended private secondary schools. Their ages ranged from 18 to 36 years.

The instrument used in this study was the Examinations Malpractices in Public Examination Questionnaire (EMPEQ). It was developed by the researcher. The face and content validities were ascertained by experts in the area of the study. Split-half reliability was used to determine the reliability of the test. The reliability coefficient was 0,85. Copies of the instrument were distributed to the 100 sampled students of St. Augustine's College of Education. They were all returned completely filled. This gave a response rate of 100%. The questionnaire were coded and the data collected were analyzed using a non-parametric procedure of frequency counts and percentage analysis. The factors were then rank- ordered with the first having the highest frequency and the 6th having the lowest frequency.

## RESULTS

**TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS AND RANK ORDER OF THE PERCEIVED CAUSES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS**

<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>RANK</b>
1. Inadequacy of trained teachers	74	74	3
2. Lack of teaching facilities in schools	35	35	6
3. Inadequacy of equipment	61	61	5
4. Students anxious to achieve success by all means	66	66	4
5. Corrupt WAEC and NECO officials and supervisors	78	78	1
6. Difficulty in getting admission into tertiary institutions	76	76	2

The results revealed that corrupt WAEC and NECO officials is the greatest perceived cause of examination malpractice in public examinations conducted by these bodies. It scored 78% of the 100 responses, Coming next with 76% is the factor of difficulty in getting admission into tertiary institutions. This factor is followed by the factor of inadequacy of trained teachers with 74%. These three factors scored above 70%. In all, it seems obvious that the factor of corrupt WAEC and NECO officials and supervisors is considered the most predominant causal factor.

### **Discussion**

The result of this study is a challenge to WAEC and NECO as public examination agencies. If the evaluation system of these public examination agencies is to demand any credibility from the Nigerian populace, then serious effort has to be made by these agencies to check their corrupt officials and supervisors who take money from candidates and their parents in order to allow them to engage in examination malpractices. Examination malpractices negate

the efforts of government and educational authorities who may be concerned with improved standard and quality of education. The result of this study also found inadequacy of trained teachers as a major perceived cause of examination malpractices. This confirms the opinion of Ajayi (1985). Efforts should be made to professionalise teaching so that only trained and qualified teaching personal are retained. If we are genuine in our efforts to improve the standard of education in the country, education authorities should make more concerted effort to have only well- trained teachers engaged in schools. This will also mean having them more motivated so that they can be retained. It is only when we have adequate well-trained teachers in our educational system that we can guarantee students' adequate preparation for public examinations and eliminate examination mal practices. It seems evident then that the findings of this study also corroborate the opinion of Ejiogu (1977) that qualified, well-motivated teachers tend to be more efficient in their teaching and consequently produce students of good standard and quality. The result also indicated that difficulty in getting admission into tertiary institutions was perceived by respondents as one of the predominant factors responsible for malpractice. This confirms the findings of Adekale (1993) and Omotosho (1990) who identified inadequate preparation for examinations as a causal factor for examination malpractice. With incessant strikes by teachers in secondary schools, students are not adequately taught. They are therefore confronted at the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examinations with questions on topics which they have not received adequate teaching. This makes their admission into tertiary institutions through JAMB an uphill task. In addition, inadequacy of equipment, inadequate teaching facilities and students anxiety to achieve success by all means were perceived as causes of malpractice in public examinations. This study found that inadequacy of equipment and lack of teaching facilities is a causal factor. The finding agrees with those of Adekale (1993) and Omotosho (1990) who identified poor school facilities as a cause of examination malpractice. This is a pointer to the fact that the Nigerian Government has to take the funding of schools more seriously. Equipment and teaching facilities enhance teaching and learning. Where they are lacking, the result is lowering of educational standards and production of misfits who are ill-prepared to take their place in society and contribute to its

development.

The result of this study also confirms the views of Sooeze (2004) and Onyechere (2004). Sooeze (2004) considered examination malpractice as illegal means which students use to pass examinations and Onyechere (2004) noted that it is almost a routine for students to cheat in examinations. Some desperate and anxious students seek to pass examinations, and since they are not adequately prepared for it, are ready to use illegal means and hence they cheat. The factor of the anxiety of students to achieve success by all means indicated in the result of this study should be expected. Everybody knows the value of educational achievement. Since the schools failed to prepare the students to succeed, they have opted to succeed through unorthodox means which, of course creates, greater problem for the entire society .

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the results of this study, it is evident that examination malpractice in public examinations conducted by WAEC and NECO could be eradicated if, first and foremost, the actions of their officials and supervisors are checked. In addition to this, students should be adequately prepared for examinations by well-trained teachers. School equipment and teaching facilities should not be lacking in our schools. If the education authorities ensure that our secondary schools are adequately staffed with well-trained and well-motivated teachers and schools which are provided with equipment and teaching facilities, we can be sure to have students well-qualified to meet the admission requirements of tertiary institutions. Examination malpractices will gradually become a thing of the past in our educational system. To check cheating in public examinations, the following are therefore recommended.

1. WAEC and NECO should do all they can to eliminate from their ranks incorrigible officials and supervisors. If they do this, they will eradicate examination malpractice and earn credibility for the public examinations they conduct.
2. Education authorities should ensure that those admitted to the teaching

profession are well-trained and well-motivated. This will ensure that the students they teach are well-prepared to take public examinations without engaging in examination malpractice.

3. Nigerian governments should take the funding of our educational institutions more seriously by ensuring that schools are provided with adequate equipment and teaching facilities. This will enhance meaningful teaching and learning and put an end to examination malpractice.

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