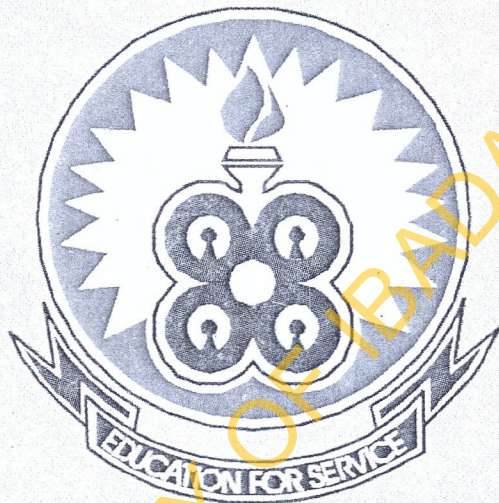


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## Causes, Effects of and Probable Solutions to Examination Malpractices in Nigeria: A case study of the West African Examinations Council.

Adams O. U. Onuka, Ph.D. and Amusan, M. A. (Mrs.) (Pg 1)

### ABSTRACT

The foci of this investigation were the causes, effects of and probable solutions to examination malpractices in Abeokuta Metropolis in Nigeria using West African Examinations Council as a case study. Stratified sampling technique was employed to obtain the various classes of respondents. The total of 350 respondents was used in the study. A segmented single instrument was used for data collection. The data was analyzed using descriptive and non-parametric statistics.

Based on the findings which include non-completion of the syllabi, over-crowdedness, poor teacher quality among others, the recommendations made include adequate coverage of syllabi, improved parental commitment towards wards' educational development, commitment to training and retraining of teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as undiluted application of Act 33 of 1999 on examination malpractices in Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractices have become a nauseating phenomenon in the Nigerian education system, thus posing a great threat to the standard of examinations in Nigeria and the acceptability of the worth of certificates resulting from them. Examination malpractices, according to Adedokun (2003), may be defined to include misconduct or any other acts not in consonance with the rules and regulations guiding examinations with a view to obtaining good results by fraudulent means. Examination malpractices have been a cause of great concern to the society to the extent that there has to be an enactment of the Examination Malpractices Act 33 of 1999 to deal with this societal menace. The West African Examinations Council also has kept a yearly record of cases of examination malpractices to buttress their prevalence in the polity.

Examination malpractices can be subdivided into three: pre-examination, during examination and post examination. In the pre-examination category is the procurement of question papers prior to the date of examination. Malpractices during examination include copying from another candidate with or without permission, impersonation, collusion by interested parties with invigilators and supervisors, intimidation of timid invigilators and supervisors, substitution of scripts of registered examinees with ones done by mercenaries etc. Others are bringing of unauthorized materials into the examination hall, like 'cell phones', watches with calculators,

receivers linked to external transmitter's hearing aid and external assistance from invigilators, supervisors, or hired persons. Post examination malpractices, on the other hand, include those traced to the full-time staff of the examinations council: unsubmitted answer scripts during the examinations being smuggled in, unearned scores are substituted earned ones, inflated scores are produced, etc. Candidates with such ill-gotten grades get admission to the universities and other institutions of higher learning where they are found to perform below expectation.

Examination malpractices have thus placed question marks on quality of the Nigerian education system and thus its certification. Hence, Uwadiae (1997), Bolarin (2002), Awanbor (2003) and the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) (2003) opine that the great emphasis on certificate as a means of employment or progress from one point to the other makes students more desperate to acquire certificates by all means thus culminating in examination malpractices. Ubhenin (2002) observes that either students do cheat or parents help them to engage in examination malpractices because they want admission at all cost. While Souza (2004) is of the view that teachers are poorly remunerated and therefore are not interested in their work and as such could result in improper teaching and making the 'not-properly' taught candidates to engage in examination malpractices.

Some studies on the subject in Nigeria, indicate that there are many causes of examination malpractices in Nigeria, among which are student laziness, poor study habits and ill-preparedness for examinations, indolence on the part of parents, teachers, and the students themselves, the premium on certificates at the expense of actual skills acquired, as well as non-completion of the

syllabi (Awanbor, 2004; Onuka & Obialo, 2004; and Shonekan, 1993). Other findings of past studies include the fact that classroom overcrowdedness lowers the output of the teachers, insufficient number of qualified teachers and poor quality of teaching thereby leading candidates to examination malpractices (Obemeata, 1991 and 1995); (Olujuwon, 1999); Abe, 1999; (Fafunwa, 1997); and (Awanbor, 2003). Also other studies reveal that inadequate learning aids in schools, inadequate space, and anxiety, fear and lack of confidence due to history of repeated failures are causes of examination malpractices in the country (WAEC, 2004; Program of Action, 1992; and Adedokun, 2003).

Umar (2004), JAMB (2003) and Taiwo (2004) observe that deteriorating societal values and peer influence as well as parents involvement in purchasing of live questions for their wards and parents' efforts to alter their wards' scores have aggravated malpractices in Nigeria. Yet another cause of examination malpractices is inadequacy of library books and/or lack of library at all as well as inadequate provision of textbooks for the students by the relevant stakeholders (WAEC, 2003). However, Ehon (2002) opines that some of the solutions to examination malpractices are improved commitment of parents and teachers to the students' educational development. *The Daily Times* Editorial (2003) suggests that improvement and expansion of infrastructures in schools, proper funding and improvement in teachers' remuneration and conditions of service will reduce examination malpractices in Nigeria. But Onyechere (2003) calls for harsher punishment for examination fraud sponsors, syndicates and centers involved in not only aiding and abetting examination fraud by students but also who profit from it, stating the need for the application of the relevant provisions of examination malpractices Decree 33 of 1999 on erring people as deterrent. This is also the contention of Onuka and Oludipe (2004), adding that with the political will to execute the commensurate punishment, examination malpractices would be a thing of the past. Awanbor (2003) also calls for the recruitment of people of high integrity and transparency as invigilators and supervisors as well as retraining of teachers in properly orientating the students

towards examinations. Thus all hands must be on deck, all brains at work and all stakeholders at attention to be able to conquer examination malpractices. Concerning solutions, Project Learning (PROLEARN) (2003) advocates intensive public enlightenment on issues relating to honest work and quality education. Awanbor (2003) recommends the organization of seminars and conferences, where the consequences on individuals, families, schools and the nation would be highlighted through effectively using renowned educationists. To do this, however, the causes of examination malpractices must be sought, the effect discovered so that probable solutions may be found and effected.

### The Problem

The study investigated the causes and effects of examination malpractices and thus prescribed the probable solutions to examination malpractices in Nigeria.

### Research Questions

Answers to these three research questions were sought:

1. What are the causes of Examination Malpractices in Nigeria?
2. What are the effects of Examination Malpractices in Nigeria?
3. What are the probable solutions to Examination Malpractices in Nigeria?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design and Methods

This research was carried out ex-post facto because no variable was manipulated, as they (the variables of interest) had already taken place.

### Selection and Sampling

Onuka and Obialo (2004), and Abe (1999) found that parents, teachers, Examinations Council staff (both ad hoc and full-time) and students were major contributors to the continued incidence of examination malpractices in Nigeria. It thus became imperative that an investigation of this nature should be carried out drawing its respondents from these four sets of stakeholders in the Nigerian education enterprise.

Thus using the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) as a case study, this investigation employed three strata of sample: Two hundred students from two tertiary institutions in Abeokuta, fifty teachers from five secondary schools, fifty parents and fifty WAEC staff

(selected randomly at two strata on equal basis of twenty-five part-time and twenty-five full-time staff).

### *Construction and Validation of Research Instrument*

A three-segmented instrument (containing a two-component five-point Likert type and one-component free response – respondent-engineered items) was developed by the authors and used for data collection. The instrument titled: **Causes, Effects of and Probable Solution to Examination Malpractices Rating Scales (CEPSEMRS)** had the following three segments.

1. A 41-item causes of examination malpractices segment
2. A 7-item effects of examination malpractices segment
3. A free-response respondent engineered 42-item the probable solutions to examination malpractices segment. In this segment the respondents were required to list whatever they considered as probable solutions to the menace of examination malpractices in Nigeria.

Section A and B consisted of Likert-type items of four-point scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree; while section C gave

respondents freedom to express themselves freely in response to the relevant open-ended question items. The instrument was given to three colleagues of the authors' institute to evaluate for face and content validity. Arising from their suggestions the instrument was modified resulting in some items being modified while others were discarded. To validate the instrument, a pilot study was carried out during which the instrument was administered on thirty (30) students in the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. Data from this pilot study were analysed to find the reliability using the Kuder-Richardson (KR-20), a reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained. To find the construct validity of the instrument, a further analysis exercise on the data was carried out which yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87. These exercises culminated in reducing the original fifty items in segment A to forty-one and thirteen items in segment B to seven.

### **Data Collection**

Data for the study were collected by the researchers and their trained assistants who administered the instrument on the various samples for a period of five weeks. Three hundred and fifty copies of the instrument were administered on the subjects and retrieved in most cases immediately after completion by the authors and their four trained research assistants. Seventy-Seven Point two percent (77.2) % of administered questionnaires were retrieved.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained were analyzed using mainly descriptive statistics: frequency counts, standard deviation, means, and percentages.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

#### **What are the causes of examination malpractices?**

The table below presents the data on examination malpractices, representing the views of the respondents on the causes of examination

Table 1: Summary Causes of Examination Malpractices

Sources	% agree	% disagree	% neutral
Students	66.8	31.8	1.4
Teachers	62.9	34.8	2.3
Parents	79.1	19.9	1.0
School	75.1	22.8	2.1
Society	68.8	29.3	1.9
Government	63.0	35.6	1.4
Peer group	54.1	50.0	1.9

The table shows the sources of the causes of exam malpractices when recategorised into seven. From the table, the percentages for agree is the highest followed by disagree and neutral the least. Here it is shown that parents contribute more to examination malpractices than any group (79.1%), followed by the school (75.1%), society (68.8%), students (66.8%), government's non-challant attitude towards examination malpractices (63.0%) and peer-group (54.1%).

**Table 1:** Aggregate mean, standard deviation minimum and maximum means of

Type	No of items	Aggregate Mean	Std Deviation	Minimum Mean	Maximum Mean
Causes of exam malpractices	41	64.7*	17.7	16.4	88.5

\* Aggregate mean percentage of 64.7

The twenty (20) items out of the forty- one (41) items contained in section A, were found to have significantly caused examination malpractices in the WAEC conducted examinations (and with percentages greater than or equal to the mean test value of 64.7%) which include: students' poor study habits (86.6%), inadequate coverage of WAEC syllabi (77%), inadequacy of textbooks (71.7%), Class-over-crowdedness (83.6%), low socio-

economic-status of parents (86.2%), inadequate learning aids (88.5%), peer-influence (81.4%), poor teaching methods/styles (77.4%), students' truancy (86.2%), anxiety (76.6%), deteriorating societal values (79.9%), inadequately stocked library/no library at all (86.6%), lack assignments for practice (69.3%), No corrective measure given on marked assignments (70%), and over-emphasis on acquisition of certificates (86.6%).

## RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

What are the effects of examination malpractices?

The following section presents the views of the respondents on the effects of examination malpractices

**Table 2-** Aggregate mean of the five most popular effects of examination malpractices

Type	No of items	Aggregate Mean	Std Deviation	Minimum Mean	Maximum Mean
Effects of exam malpractices	7	78.7*	11.3	56.9	90.7

\* Aggregate mean percentage of 78.7 of the five most popular effects.

The following five (5) effects of examination malpractices on the polity were identified in the study. Their means were either equal or greater than the aggregate mean value of 78.7. These items are the ones picked as the clear effects of exam malpractices in this study. They are denial of admission to good students (80.6%), deteriorating quality of Nigerian graduates (80.3%), increase in crimes within the campuses (85.1%), examination malpractices arising from muslroom coaching centres (85.5%) and shift of

interest from learning to possessing certificates (90.7%).

## RESEARCH QUESTION 3:

What are the probable solutions to examination malpractices?

The section below presents the findings of the study on the probable solutions to examination malpractices.

Table

3: Aggregate mean of the thirteen most popular probable solutions to examination malpractices

Type	No of items	Aggregate Mean	Std Deviation	Minimum Mean	Maximum Mean
Probable solutions to exam malpractices	42	18.7*	20.7	1.0	84.0

The aggregate mean of 18.7 compare the maximum mean of 84 for provision of infrastructures as a probable solution to examinations, tending to show on unseriousness on the part of the people to find lasting solutions to the menace.

Of the forty-two (42) probable solutions proffered by the respondents in section C of the instrument only thirteen (13) items were found to be significant (having their frequencies greater than or equal to the aggregate mean value). These are: adequate coverage of syllabi (30), regular attendance at classes by teachers, teaching well, re-teaching difficult topics and assisting weaker students (64), improvement of teachers' remuneration (37), improvement in counselling students (24), provision of relevant textbooks, appropriate learning aids and infrastructures by the government (84), the prompt application of the relevant provision of the examination malpractices act 33 of 1999 on erring people (56), societal value re-orientation (48), employment of more qualified teachers (24), provision of and well-stocked school and public libraries (41), improved parental guidance and monitoring (62), development of good study habits (54), provision of adequate number of textbooks by parents (27) and recruitment of enough invigilators and supervisors with integrity (30)..

#### Discussions

The results of this study have thrown more light on the causes, effects of and probable solutions to examination malpractices as discussed below:

#### Causes of Examination Malpractices

The study shows that students' indolence/poor study habits and ill- preparedness for examination are some of the causes of examination malpractices in the WAEC conducted examination in Nigeria. Students are found to be non-challant, indolent, possess poor study habits and thus are ill-prepared for examinations. These results corroborate the findings of Awanbor (2004) that same factors were largely responsible for examination malpractices in the country. Yet another cause of examination malpractices in the WAEC conducted examinations in Nigeria is inadequate coverage of syllabi by the various schools preparing students for WAEC conducted examinations possibly because the teachers are unable to cover the syllabi due to either indolence or as a result of long period of strikes. This confirms the assertion of Shonekan (1993), Olujuwon (2003), Ivowi (1993) as well as Olujuwon (1993).

The claim by respondents that over-crowdedness and the consequent non-conducive environment caused examination malpractices also confirmed the finding of Obemeata (1991, 1995) and Olujuwon (1999) that over-crowdedness lowers the output of the teachers and the subsequent student learning rate. This development could definitely lead to examination malpractices given the level of craze on the part of Nigerians to acquire certificate by all means. The study shows that low teacher / students' ratio caused examination malpractices as the teacher had more than enough to handle and so affected his output rate because he had to spread his/her time over more students than he could cope up with. Again this finding confirms the observation by Obemeata (1991, 1995) that too many students to one teacher could affect the output of the teacher and the expected learning outcomes acquired by the students. The quality of teacher qualification was another issue mentioned as a cause of examination malpractices in the WAEC conducted examinations in Nigeria. This finding conforms to the observation of Fafunwa (1997), Ipaye (1997), Abc (1999) and Awanbor (2003) that the quality of training given to teachers had deteriorated that it is so poor that the teacher employs poor teaching methodologies. Thus poorly taught students resort to cheating in the examinations in order to pass. Irregular attendance at classes and the attendant ill-preparation for examination as a major cause of examination malpractices, as was shown in the study, agrees with the finding of Ubhenin (2002) that irregular attendance of students at school is a major cause of examination malpractices. Truancy has robbed the student

of knowledge acquisition and utilization and thus left with examination malpractices.

The revelation by this study that high level of emphasis on the possession of certificates as a prime cause of examination malpractices is confirmed by the assertion of Uwadiae (1997), Bolarin (2002), Awanbor (2003) and JAMB (2003) that the great emphasis on certificates as a means of employment or progress from one point to the other makes students more desperate to acquire certificates and the result is examination malpractices.

The research result agrees with WAEC (2004) that unavailability of adequate learning aids in schools could cause examination malpractices since the availability and use of such aids would normally facilitate learning. The revelation that inadequate space and of examination anxiety, fear and lack of confidence due to history of repeated failures cause examination malpractices corroborate the views of Program of Action (1992) and Adedokun (2003) in these regards. The study shows clearly that deteriorating societal values and peer influence do lead candidates into malpractices and this is in consonance with the observation of JAMB, (2003), Umar (2004) and Taiwo (2004) that parents at times budget money to purchase live questions for their wards and make efforts to alter their wards' scores after the their works have been assessed and graded.

Another cause of examination malpractices is inadequate stock of library books or lack of libraries in schools and inadequate provision of textbooks for the students by parents thus confirming the report of WAEC, (2003) on causes of poor performance and the findings by (Onuka and Obialo, 2004). However, this study does not agree with the finding of other referenced works that there is inadequate education on the evils of examination malpractices, that low socio-economic status of candidates' parents can encourage the malaise, that students cheat or parents help them in examination malpractices because they want admission at all cost, or with view that that teachers are poorly remunerated and therefore are not interested in their work; the not-properly taught candidates therefore engage in examination malpractices (Ubhenin, (2002); and

Souza, (2004) as this had proved these factors have little or no effect on examination malpractices at all.

## EFFECTS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES

The results show that the preponderance of examination malpractices has led to institutionalizing mediocrity. Also the quality of graduates of the various strata of education is fast deteriorating thus confirming the assertion of Ubhenin (2003) that the graduate's self worth is being eroded. This is so because the graduate can hardly raise his head among his peer from elsewhere, especially when he is aware that his worth is being doubted and he can not prove his mettle. The study agrees with the assertion of Onyechere (2003) that examination malpractices have led to other vices in the Nigerian society especially in the nations' tertiary institutions. These manifest in the fact that corruption is now openly applauded and campus cultism has been on the increase as well as also being closely linked to examination malpractices. Products of examination malpractices now appear to dominate the polity agreeing with Onyechere's (2003) view that most of the social maladies, including medical practice by incompetent doctors, manufacture and sale of fake drugs by pharmacists, collapse of buildings, massive fraud in banks, miscarriage of justice are all products of mediocrity which examination malpractices promote.

The result of this study that one effect of examination malpractices is the unnecessary springing up of mushroom coaching centres and private schools where students are helped to obtain good results once they can pay the required fees, thereby bringing more ridicule to the education industry in Nigeria thus conforming the view of Umar (2004). The result of this research that one of the effects of examination malpractices is that poor students are offered admission in higher institutions at the expense of good ones because they have cheated and passed in their school certificate examinations is in consonance with the view of Osindeinde (2004). Many of the respondents also noted that another effect of examination malpractices is the fact that there is a shift of interest by students from learning as they no longer desire to learn but are only out to just have their names appended on certificates. This finding is in conformity with the findings of Onuka and Obialo (2004). The study also shows that one uncomely effect of examination malpractices is the fact that Nigerian certificates no longer



earn the desired respect outside the shores of the country, which according to Omole (1993) and Adedokun (2003), are actually sometimes rejected and in some cases even within the shores of the country. However, the finding contradicts the view of Osideinde (2004) who asserts that examination malpractices are the cause for the country's poor work attitude.

### THE PROBABLE SOLUTIONS TO EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES

The outcome of research that there is a decline in the society's moral and ethical standards and a need for a societal reorientation is in consonance with JAMB's (2003) suggestion in the same direction as well as Ehon's (2002) belief that our value system deserves a re-examination in order to correct it. The view of the respondents that there is the need for intensive public enlightenment on issues relating to honest work and qualitative education agrees with the advocacy of PROLEARN (2003) that there should be intensive public enlightenment on issues relating to honest work and qualitative education. Another suggested probable solution is that of organizing workshops/conferences and / or seminars to enlighten people on the evils of examination malpractices and how to avoid and be a proud achiever anywhere in the world as other Nigerians in other countries having to engage in examination malpractices. This suggested solution is in tandem with the observation made by Awanbor (2003) that there should be seminars and conferences on the consequences of examination malpractices on individual students, families, schools and the nation. The following proffered solutions to examination malpractices such as improved commitment of parents and teachers to the students' educational development agrees with the conclusion of Ehon (2002) that commitment on the parts of parents and teachers is highly commended if examination malpractices are to be eradicated. The other posited solutions ensuing from this study include: regular attendance of teachers at classes, teaching well, re-teaching difficult topics and helping weaker students; improved parental guidance and monitoring; and parental provision of

adequate textbooks. These are in tandem with those that were posited by Onuka and Obialo (2004).

The other solutions proffered from the findings of this study are: the recruitment and use of invigilators and supervisors of proven integrity and application of harsher punishment for examination fraud sponsors, syndicates and centers involved in both aiding and abetting examination fraud by students, and who also profit from exam fraud. These findings are in agreement with the views of Awanbor (2003) who called for the training of credible people as supervisors and Onyechere (2003) and Onuka and Oludipe who advocate prompt invocation of the relevant provisions of examination malpractices Decree 33 of 1999 on exam fraudsters to serve as deterrent to future perpetrators.

The Daily Times Editorial (2003) agrees with the findings of the study that improvement and expansion of infrastructure in schools, proper funding and improvement in teachers' remuneration and conditions of service be put in motion if the nation is determined to bring exam malpractices to a standstill. This supports the view expressed in the Daily Times Editorial (2003) about infrastructural facilities and funding educational institutions and that teachers be properly remunerated.

Obvious from the study is the fact that students' study habits must be improved to stem the rising tide of exam malpractices. This is in consonance with the finding JAMB (2003) in the same vein. In agreement with the finding of Osindiende (2004) the respondents in this study was of the opinion that if teachers made efforts to cover the subject syllabi, malpractices would be reduced to the barest minimum. The finding of this investigation does not agree with the view of WAEC (2003) that if parents desisted from foisting subjects on their children in which they are not interested, incidences of examination malpractices could be reduced, nor with that of Awanbor (2003) that malpractices would be reduced if the importance of practical assessment text could be elevated above theoretical assessment test, or the examining body commending individuals, centers or schools seen as well-behaved and malpractice-free during its examinations.

## Conclusions

The fact that it is no gain-saying that examination malpractices do more harm than good to our education system should lead all stakeholders in the country's education system to strive to change the average Nigerian attitude towards teaching and learning.

In this regard there is the need to urgently call a Stakeholders' Meeting to address the issues relating to curbing the menace and thus restore to the system its lost glory.

## Recommendations

1. All stakeholders, therefore, must cooperate with one another so as to stem the rising tide of examination malpractices in the polity.
2. Each stakeholder must have well-designed roles to play to ensure total eradication of examination malpractices and thereby restore value to the Nigerian Certificates.
3. The focus of campaign against examination malpractices must shift to syndicates and networks that profit from examination fraud business and to teachers as well as principals who aid malpractices in order to return a score of 100 percent as evidence of their hard work.
4. Credible supervisors and invigilators should be sought and recruited to take the place of those who engage in perpetuating the acts of examination malpractices in order to gain additional income.
5. In addition, corruption in the society must be honestly fought on all fronts and by all persons, if examination malpractices are to be totally eradicated. Students and teachers alike must be encouraged to work hard in order to reduce or eliminate the incidences of examination malpractices.
6. The necessary learning and teaching materials as well as conducive learning environment should be provided and/or created in schools to assist learning.
7. Good quality teachers should be recruited and supervision improved in the schools

so that malpractices in examinations can be eliminated. In fact, the government and other stakeholders should build examination halls across the country with the sole aim of using them for the conduct of examinations only.

8. Security in and around examination centres should be improved and assured.
9. Patriotic supervisors and examining council/board officials who disallow examination malpractices and or apprehend culprits at exam centres should be duly rewarded in order encourage more patriotism among those charged with the conduct of examinations nationwide irrespective of whether they are hoc or permanent staff of the examining body.

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