



IMPACT OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE.

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Abstract

This study was on the Impact of Examination Malpractice on students' performance in agricultural science in Senior Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State. Descriptive survey design was used with the population of 78 Agricultural science teachers and 2125 agricultural science students in all the public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State. While the sample of 3 public and 3 private schools were randomly selected from each of the 3 educational zones of the state and that gave rise to 18 schools. Further random sampling was used to pick 10 students and 2 Teachers per school making a total of 216 respondents used for the study. Four research questions and one hypothesis guided the study and four points Likert scale questionnaire which had a grand reliability index of 0.89 was used for data collection. The research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and Z-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: The government, school administrators, NGOs and all stakeholders in education system should work together to curb the menace of examination malpractice in Ebonyi State. The wrong value system and quest for certification instead of knowledge and skills should be de-emphasized.

Keywords: Examination malpractice, impact on secondary school students.

Introduction

Education creates pathway through which self development and success is attained. Through education, knowledge and information acquired leads to a successful future. Take education away and man's life becomes directionless. In life, education starts at birth and ends at death. In view of the above, parents and guardians sometimes stretch themselves, financially and otherwise, to a breaking point in a bid to provide good and quality education for their children and wards. However, since education leads to the acquisition of knowledge and information, it therefore means there is need to ascertain the level of understanding of the subject matter gained by the individual. Therefore, the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at any academic level, requires testing or assessment at a point. The type of education (formal, informal, non-formal) determines the type and nature of

examination to be administered. Different examinations are given at different levels. It is expected that such examinations are passed, failure of which might attract repeat of the class, expulsion or failure to gain admission into an institution as the case may be. The common belief on certificate as the only yard stick to measure ones qualification has led many Nigerians into buying educational certificates to prove their academic worth (Onyibe *et al.*, 2015).

Examination malpractice was first reported in Nigeria in the year 1914 when the question papers of senior Cambridge local examination were reportedly seen with candidates before the scheduled date of the examination (Anzene, 2014). The examination malpractice act (1999) defined examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any



examination, fraudulently secure any advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to any extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity and ultimately the integrity of the certificate issued.

From all indications, examination malpractice has become one of the biggest challenges facing educational industry in Nigeria. The problem has eaten deep into the sector that it can no longer be ignored. The rate of this crime has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere at all levels and outside the formal school system that there is no one form of illegal practice or another (Nnam and Inah, 2015). It is common knowledge that miracle examination centres where students can cheat and have unfair advantages have been in existence for decades (Nnam and Inah, 2015).

The West African Examination Council (WAEC) expressed concern over persistent cases of examination malpractice in the country despite various measures being deployed against the menace as narrated by the head of National Office of WAEC, Nigeria (Patrick, A, 2023). About 60% of students who sit for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) every year engage in one form of examination malpractice or another. Agricultural Science has not been spared of the menace hence this study.

Statement of Problem

The challenges posed by examination malpractice cannot be over emphasized. It can have various negative effects on individuals, educational institutions and the society as a whole. It is a threat to the validity and reliability of the certificates paraded by graduates of many schools in Nigeria today. The emphasis on certificate rather than capability of persons by employers of labour in Nigeria has worsened the situation. High value is placed on academic results over skills and professionalism. It is no longer a surprise to see a graduate of senior secondary education in Nigeria scoring all A's in WASSCE but can hardly defend any of the subjects with the A grade. The menace,

unfortunately, is perpetrated by students, parents, guardians, teachers, examiners and school administrators. Considering the magnitude of problems created by the ugly trend; this study is to investigate the possible impact of examination malpractice on students' performance in agricultural science in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The study majorly, investigated the impact of examination malpractice on students' performance in Agricultural Science in Senior Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State.

Specifically, the study investigated the following:

1. The type of examination malpractice indulged in by students in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
2. The causes of examination malpractice among students of Agricultural science in senior secondary school in Ebonyi State.
3. The effects of examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State.
4. Propose the necessary measures that will prevent examination malpractice in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What types of examination malpractices are indulged in by students in senior secondary school in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the causes of examination malpractice in Ebonyi State?
3. What are the effects of examination malpractice in Ebonyi State?
4. What measures can be used to stop examination malpractice in Ebonyi State?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis guided the study and was tested at 0.05 significant levels.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of public and private senior secondary school students on the effect of examination malpractice on students performance in Agricultural



science

Research Methodology

Design of the Study

A descriptive survey design which is used in research to collect, interprets, explain and describe conditions of research information and facts was employed to elicit information from the respondents.

Area of the Study

The study covers all the public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State

Population of the Study

The population of the study is made up of 78 Agricultural science teachers and 2125 agricultural science students in all the public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 3 public and 3 private schools were randomly selected from each of the 3 educational zones of the state and that gave rise to 18 schools. Further random sampling was used to pick 10 students and 2 Teachers per school making a total of 216 respondents used for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A well designed questionnaire titled “Impact of Examination malpractice questionnaire” (IEMQ) was used to collect data from the respondents. The likert scale format type of questions arranged as follows was used to collect data thus: strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding rating scale of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The determinant item of 2.50 was

arrived at as follows: $4+3+2+1 = 10$; $4 = 2.50$.

Therefore any item that scores 2.50 and above is regarded as agreed while any item that scores below 2.50 is regarded as disagreed,

Validity of the instrument

The draft copies were validated by four experts, 2 from the Faculty of Agriculture and 2 persons from the Faculty of measurement and evaluation, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki for both face and content validation.

Reliability of the Instrument

The test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered two times to 40 respondents selected from some senior secondary schools that were not used for the study at intervals of two weeks. The results were subjected to internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha Method and a reliability index of 0.85 was obtained which means that the instrument is highly reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered and collected personally with the assistance of two other persons, each one covering each zone.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and a bench mark of 2.50 was used as acceptance or otherwise of the statement while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 significant level. The data were presented in tables and analyzed accordingly.

Result Presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1: What type of examination malpractice do students indulge in Ebonyi State?

**Table 1:** Mean ratings and standard deviation of types of examination malpractice in the study area.

S/N	VARIABLES	PUBLIC SEC SCH. (216)			PRIVATE SEC. SCH. (216)		
		Mean (X)	SD	DEC	Mean	SD	DEC
1	Impersonation	2.66	0.30	A	2.59	0.68	A
2	Swapping of scripts	2.82	0.64	A	2.62	0.65	A
3	Smuggling of prepared scripts into the hall	3.01	0.52	A	2.81	0.67	A
4	Copying from other students	2.54	0.60	A	2.56	0.70	A
5	Fraudulent practices by invigilators/supervisors	2.73	0.65	A	2.58	0.68	A
6	Inscription on the body and desk	3.29	0.45	A	2.51	0.73	A
7	Bring the invigilators/supervisors	2.57	0.71	A	2.90	0.12	A
8	Falsification of marks	2.51	0.73	A	2.62	0.38	A
9	Destroying of evidence by chewing or any other means	2.50	0.84	A	2.53	0.82	A
	Grand mean and standard deviation	2.74	0.60	A	2.64	0.60	A

Decision Value = 2.50; X=mean; SD = Standard Deviation; DEC = Decision

Data in table 1 indicates that the mean ratings of the responses on all the variables were higher

than 2.50 which clearly show that the respondents agreed that the items are types of examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in the study area.

Research question 2: What are the causes of examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of the causes of examination malpractice in the study area.

S/N	VARIABLES	PUBLIC SEC SCH.			PRIVATE SEC. SCH.		
		Mean (X)	SD	DEC	Mean	SD	DEC
1	Fear of failure	2.75	1.18	A	2.67	1.20	A
2	Craze for certificate	3.06		A	3.08	0.21	A
3	Non implementation of examination malpractice decree which provides for 21 years jail	3.17	0.99	A	3.15	0.92	A
4	Insufficient preparation for examination	2.81	0.80	A	2.90	0.74	A
5	Parental pressure to have children in choice profession & university	3.10	0.89	A	3.28	0.93	A
6	Pressure on students to study courses which they have no aptitude	2.99	1.16	A	2.66	1.07	A
7	Poor invigilation of students	2.64	1.10	A	2.61	0.90	A
8	Overcrowded sitting arrangement	2.56	1.13	A	2.71	0.87	A
9	Ill-equipped library facilities	2.51	1.02	A	2.52	1.12	A
	Grand mean and standard deviation	2.84	1.05	A	2.84	0.88	A



Decision Value= 2.50; X=mean; SD = Standard Deviation; DEC = Decision

Table 2 above shows the mean ratings and standard deviation on the causes of examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in

Ebonyi State.

Research question 3: What are the effects of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 3: Mean ratings and standard deviation of the effects of examination malpractice on students' performance.

S/N	VARIABLES	PUBLIC SEC SCH. (216)			PRIVATE SEC. SCH. (216)		
		Mean(X)	SD	DEC	Mean X	SD	DEC
1	Examination malpractice erodes students' sense of academic integrity and ethical conduct	3.05	1.04	A	3.09	0.02	A
2	It devalues hard work	3.40	1.01	A	3.02	0.90	A
3	It discourages genuine efforts	2.90	1.11	A	2.37	1.33	A
4	It undermines the principle of fairness and meritocracy in education	3.26	0.83	A	2.94	1.05	A
5	It leads to expulsion and demotion	3.41	1.01	A	3.09	1.04	A
6	It promotes the mindset of shortcuts and deceits	2.73	1.14	A	2.37	1.33	A
7	It promotes lack of self-confidence	2.85	1.10	A	2.77	0.96	A
8	Examination centers involved are black listed		0.96	A	2.98	1.02	A
9	It leads to cancelation of students results		1.16	A	2.68	1.05	A
10	Certificates so obtained cannot be defended	2.74	0.91	A	3.05	0.92	A
	Grand mean and standard deviation	2.55	1.21	A	2.84	0.98	A

Decision Value=2.50; X=mean; SD=Standard Deviation; DEC = Decision

Table 3 above shows the effect of students' performance in the study area. The data further reveals that items 3 and 6 under private secondary school has mean ratings below 2.50 which is an indication that the respondents do not agree that the variables are part of the effects of examination malpractice in the study area.

However, all other items both private and Public Secondary schools have mean ratings above 2.50 which is an acceptance by the respondents that the items have negative effects on education in the study area.

Research question 4: What measures can be applied to stop examination malpractice in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State?

**Table 4:** Mean ratings and standard deviation of measures to stop examination malpractice in the study area

S/N	VARIABLES	PUBLIC SEC SCH. (216)			PRIVATE SEC. SCH. (216)		
		Mean (X)	SD	DEC	Mean X	SD	DEC
1	Curb the menace with de-emphasis on the superiority of certificates over skills and professional competence	2.82	0.96		2.80	0.98	A
2	The government, NGOs and school administrators should organize workshops, seminars and conferences to campaign against examination malpractice	2.86	1.19		2.83	1.20	A
3	Examination malpractice decree which provides for 21 years jail term for offenders should be implemented	3.46	0.73		3.49	0.77	A
4	Adequate remuneration of educationists will enhance their commitment to duties	3.34	0.77		3.29	0.79	A
5	Reading culture among students should be promoted	2.81	0.94		2.73	0.85	A
6	Effective career counseling should be made compulsory in schools	3.91	0.93	A	2.89	0.95	A
	Grand mean and standard deviation	3.03	0.92	A	3.05	0.92	A

Decision value 2.50; x = mean; SD = Standard deviation DEC = Decision

The result in table 4 shows that all the variables both in public and private senior secondary schools, if put in place will stop examination malpractice in the study area.

Result of Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of private and public senior secondary school students on the effect of examination malpractice in Agricultural Science in the study area.

Table 5: The mean rating of public and private senior secondary school students on the effect of examination malpractice in agricultural science in the study area.

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	LS	Z-CAL	Z-CRIT.	DEC
Private Sec. Sch.	216	2.99	1.21					
Private Sec. Sch.	216	2.84	0.96	430	0.05	0.12	1.96	Accepted

Note: N = Number of respondents; X=mean; SD=Standard Deviation;
DF = Degree of Freedom; LS= Level of significance; ZCAL = Z-Calculated; ZCRIT = Z calculated; DEC=Decision

The result presented in table 5 clearly indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of both the public and private

secondary school on the effect of examination malpractice in the area of study as the calculated value of 0.12 is less than the critical value of 1.96.

Discussion of Findings

The research findings revealed different types of examination malpractice engaged in by students both in public and private secondary schools in



Ebonyi State. The respondents agreed that the following are the types of examination malpractice in the study area: impersonation, swapping of scripts, smuggling of prepared scripts into the hall, copying from other students, fraudulent practices by invigilators and supervisors, inscriptions on the body and on the desks, bribing the invigilators and supervisors, falsification of marks, destroying of evidence by chewing among others.

The respondents further agreed that the items presented were the causes of examination malpractices in the senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State. This discovery is in line with the result of (Onyibe *et al* 2015) who noted that over dependence on educational certificates as a measure of one's knowledge and competence has lead to a mad rush by most people for educational certificates through unethical means. In their own work, Akaranga and Ogongong (2013) view the cause of examination malpractice to parental upbringing. Also, Jimoh, (2009) noted that the disjunction between culturally acclaimed goals and the institutionalized means of achieving those goals coupled with the cultural context of great emphasis on success-goals without equivalent emphasis upon institutional means of attaining these goals have created an environment that predisposes some students, teachers, parents and others to examination malpractices.

The results from research question three revealed that the following were the effects of examination malpractices in the study: examination malpractice erodes students' sense of academic integrity and ethical conduct, it devalues hard work, it discourages genuine efforts, it undermines the principle of fairness and meritocracy in education, it leads to expulsion or demotion of students, it promotes the mindset of shortcuts and deceits, it leads to lack of self-confidence. However, the respondents drawn from the private secondary schools do not agree to items 3 and 6 as the effects of examination malpractice in the study area. In their work, Onyibe *et al*, (2015) noted that in a society where examination malpractice is predominant, their impacts are visibly seen in the

type of human resources the education system has produced. The results also shows that the respondents agreed that all measures enumerated will stop examination malpractice if implemented. This is in agreement with Simeon (2022) who noted that if there is no punishment given to offenders; examination malpractice among students will remain unlimited.

The mean ratings of the hypothesis tested as presented in table 5 shows that there is a significant relationship between examination malpractice and the performance of students of agricultural science both in public and private secondary schools in Ebonyi State. This is in line with the work of Oko (2016) who opined that the candidates produced in this manner will grow into adult's, teachers or examination officials who will not see anything wrong with such sophisticated and high class examination fraud thus defeating the goals of education by turning out certificate frauds and illiterates.

Conclusion

The findings of the study have shown that examination malpractice is a major problem in the study area and it is perpetrated in different ways which includes impersonation, swapping of scripts, copying from other students, etc. students in the study area hardly see it again as a crime since it is a common routine to cheat in examinations. The causes were attributed to fear of failure, craze for certificates, and non implementation of examination malpractice decree of the Nigerian constitution which provides for 21 years of jail term for offenders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government, NGOs, School administrators and indeed all stakeholders in the educational system should mount serious campaign against examination malpractice at all level of education in Ebonyi State.
2. The government should put in place measures to enforce the implementation of Act 33 of 1999 constitution which



- stipulates cancelation of results, fines of N100,000.00 and a jail term of 21 years if found guilty.
3. The wrong value system and quest for certification instead of knowledge and skills as obtained in the society should be de-emphasized especially by employers of labour and school administrators.
 4. School administrators should put in place
 5. measures that will ensure proper invigilation of examinations. Invigilators and supervisors who are found to collude with students to cheat in examination should be demoted, sacked, or referred to law enforcement agents for prosecution.
 5. The government should vote more funds into the education to ensure proper staffing and funding of the sector.

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