

ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS SUSTAINING THE PERSISTENCE OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ADAMAWA STATE NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study examined the administrative factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State, with a view to suggesting measures for overcoming them. One research question and one null hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. Using the multistage sampling technique, a total sample of 668 respondents was used where 27 principals, 81 teachers, 540 students and 20 external examination officials in Adamawa State were selected. An Administrative Factors Sustaining Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (AFSEMQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by three experts. Two from the Educational Administration and Planning Unit, and one from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit, Department of Science Education, all from the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was used to determine the instruments that yielded reliability coefficients of 0.89. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation, while the research hypothesis was tested statistically using ANOVA. The finding of the study revealed that school administrative-related factors are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools such 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, students from wealthy homes influencing examiners with their parents' wealth, some invigilators allowing examination malpractice to take place because they expect illegal returns from candidates; and selection of incompetent examination invigilators based on favour instead of merit among others. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State can be overcome when the federal government take a frontal attack on corruption.

Keywords: Administrative factors, adult education examination malpractice, public secondary Schools

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right, serving as the conduit for individual talent development to its fullest potential. The process of learning, intentional or unintentional, involves the acquisition of knowledge and skills, shaping individuals for meaningful contributions to self and society. The United Nations International Cultural and Educational Fund, UNICEF (2010), emphasizes that access to quality education creates a ripple effect of opportunities, impacting multiple generations. In the Federal Republic of Nigeria, secondary education, as defined by the National Policy on Education (1998:16), follows primary education and precedes the tertiary stage. Examinations play a pivotal role in assessing progress

and qualifications, serving as a means to examine the level of competence attained by students in absorbing, reproducing, and applying knowledge. Educational administration, shared between federal and state-level education ministries and commissions, involves directing and controlling resources to achieve desired goals. However, secondary school administration in Nigeria faces numerous challenges, including inadequate facilities, low staff morale, poor supervision, parental issues, staff problems, district challenges, insufficient funding, and unstable government policies (Uwakwe, 2012).

Examination malpractice, a pervasive issue, refers to any action that renders an examination ineffective in evaluating a candidate's competence. This extends from the setting of examinations to the release of results and issuance of certificates (Adegoke, 2010). Rooted in societal and educational problems, such as university improvement struggles, delayed salary payments, and materialistic aspirations, examination malpractice has become a prevalent menace. The pursuit of wealth, driven by a desire for tertiary education and subsequent white-collar jobs, has further fuelled this illicit practice. The consequences of examination malpractice are far-reaching, affecting the standard of education, producing under qualified graduates, and fostering a culture of corruption. The correlation between dishonesty in obtaining excellent results and corruption is evident, as examination malpractice undermines the principles of meritocracy.

However, the ramifications of examination malpractice on education are extensive and multifaceted, with various authors shedding light on the profound consequences of this pervasive issue. According to Ezeani (2018), malpractice erodes the reliability of assessment tools, leading to inaccurate evaluations and compromising the production of competent graduates. Olayinka (2019) emphasizes that malpractice breeds a culture of dishonesty among students, diverting the focus from genuine learning to seeking shortcuts for success, hindering the development of critical thinking skills. Nwankwo (2020) highlights how the prevalence of malpractice diminishes the credibility of academic certificates, negatively impacting career opportunities and economic advancement. Ahmed (2017) suggests that malpractice introduces a competitive imbalance among students, perpetuating a cycle of dishonesty and compromising the educational environment. Adelokun (2021) emphasizes the psychological impact on students involved in malpractice, including guilt, fear of consequences, and diminished self-esteem. Onuoha (2018) points out that teachers and educational administrators also suffer as malpractice undermines their efforts to impart knowledge and compromises the value of their dedication. Obi (2019) underscores the broader societal impact, as malpractice contributes to the production of ill-equipped graduates, potentially hindering national development. In essence, the effects of examination malpractice extend beyond the academic realm, impacting the integrity of education, the psychology of students, the credibility of certificates, and the overall societal development.

Hence, within this context, administrative factors are suspected to contribute significantly to the persistence of examination malpractice. School administrative issues, especially those related to the authority of secondary school principals, play a crucial role. Principals are tasked with developing and implementing educational programs, procuring staff, providing facilities, maintaining records, and creating conducive learning environments. The perpetrators, ranging from students to parents, teachers, supervisors, WAEC officials, and school proprietors, are complicit in perpetuating this detrimental practice. However, efforts to eradicate examination malpractice require a comprehensive approach involving parents, teachers, principals, school proprietors, supervisors, and WAEC officials. A collective commitment to instilling values of quality study, determination, and merit-based success from

early education to tertiary institutions is essential for restoring integrity to the education system and fostering sustainable economic development.

In the context of the study on the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria, and its implications for adult education, the role of adult education is underscored by various scholars. According to Smith (2018), adult education plays a crucial role in addressing and mitigating the identified challenges. Adult education programs, as highlighted by Jimoh (2009), serve as a pivotal platform for raising awareness about the detrimental consequences of examination malpractice. By organizing workshops, seminars, and community outreach initiatives, adults, including parents and community leaders, can be sensitized to the significance of maintaining academic integrity. Additionally, as noted by Brown (2020), adult education can focus on skill development, enhancing the capabilities of community members and fostering a culture that values education, thereby discouraging malpractices. Moreover, targeting parents and guardians through adult education, as suggested by Anderson (2017), can emphasize their vital role in creating a supportive educational environment at home, ultimately reducing the likelihood of engagement in malpractices. The integration of modules on ethical values and citizenship within adult education curricula, as proposed by Taylor (2019), can instill a sense of responsibility and integrity in the community, emphasizing the broader societal impact of examination malpractice. Collaborative efforts between adult education institutions, community leaders, and schools, as recommended by Clark (2018), can contribute to a holistic approach, empowering community members to actively monitor and support educational institutions, ensuring accountability and discouraging malpractices. In essence, as emphasized by various authors, adult education in Nigeria has the potential to catalyze positive change by addressing the root causes of examination malpractice and fostering a more robust and integrity-driven educational system in Adamawa State and the wider Nigerian context.

Hence, while existing research on examination malpractice in educational settings has addressed various dimensions of the problem, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific administrative factors contributing to the persistence of this issue in public secondary schools in Adamawa State. Prior studies have explored the prevalence and consequences of examination malpractice at a broader level but have not sufficiently delved into the intricate administrative challenges within the secondary school system in this specific region. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by focusing on Adamawa State and investigating the nuanced administrative factors that sustain the prevalence of examination malpractice. Additionally, there is a limited exploration of the implications of examination malpractice on adult education. This study aims to contribute valuable insights into how adult education programs can play a role in addressing and mitigating the challenges posed by examination malpractice in the context of Adamawa State. Therefore, the study not only addresses the gap in understanding administrative factors but also extends its scope to examine the implications for adult education, providing a comprehensive perspective on this critical issue within the Nigerian educational landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Examination malpractice, a pervasive issue evident over the years, has significantly impeded creativity and resourcefulness in the education sector. The consequences of this illicit practice are reflected in the production of incompetent graduates, ultimately affecting the quality of services provided and detrimentally impacting the lives of the masses. Despite various measures implemented by the Nigerian Government and Adamawa State, such as result cancellations, school de-recognition, promulgation of Examination Decrees, and teacher

dismissals, examination malpractice continues to thrive, posing a formidable challenge to the attainment of the goals and objectives outlined in the National Policy on Education for secondary education in Nigeria and, specifically, in Adamawa State. This study aims to delve into the administrative factors responsible for the persistent prevalence of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Adamawa State. In light of the ongoing challenges, the research seeks to answer two key questions: What administrative factors contribute to the persistence of examination malpractice in secondary schools in Adamawa State? What proactive measures can be implemented to effectively contain and eradicate this menace? The study acknowledges the existing efforts and interventions made by educational authorities and the government but aims to identify specific administrative factors that may have been overlooked. By addressing these factors, the research endeavours to propose comprehensive and sustainable solutions that will serve as a permanent remedy to the hindrance posed by examination malpractice within the realm of secondary school administration in Adamawa State. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the restoration of integrity and meritocracy in the education system, aligning with the broader objectives of secondary education in the state and Nigeria as a whole.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to examine the administrative factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State, with a view to suggesting measures for overcoming them. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the school administrative-related factors that are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study

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

Hypothesis

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

H₀₁: 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 Adamawa State.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design, specifically focusing on the systematic description of activities related to factors contributing to persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State. Data were collected through a questionnaire administered to a representative sample of 668 respondents, consisting of teachers and principals from public secondary schools, external examination officials, and representatives from WAEC and NECO. The study's population comprised 84,259 individuals, including 476,655 students, 6,874 and 655 principals from public secondary schools, and 55 external examination officials. The sample size was determined through a multistage sampling technique. Initially, three out of the five education zones in the state were randomly selected.

Subsequently, SS3 students from various schools were identified as key respondents, with 20 students sampled from each school using a simple random sampling technique, resulting in a total of 540 students. At the fifth stage, 20 staff members from both WAEC and NECO offices (10 from each) were sampled at the state headquarters as external examination officials for the study. Data collection involved the use of a Structured Administrative Factors Sustaining Examination Malpractice Questionnaire (AFSEMQ) developed by the researchers. The questionnaire comprised 24 items divided into two parts: personal data of respondents and information on administrative factors sustaining examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State. A response scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) was used, with values assigned as SA=4, A=3, D=2, and SD=1. The instrument's validity was established through expert validation, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach Alpha, resulting in a coefficient of 0.89. To answer research questions, mean and standard deviation were employed, with items scoring 2.50 and above accepted as factors contributing to persistent examination malpractice. For hypothesis testing, ANOVA was applied at a 0.05 level of significance, rejecting the null hypothesis if the F-calculated value exceeded the critical or table value and accepting it otherwise.

RESULTS

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

S/N	Item Statement	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 is 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 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.

Ho1: 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 Adamawa 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 ^a	0.31	3.01 ^a	0.18	3.26 ^b	0.14	3.21 ^b	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 public secondary schools. The result showed 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 exists 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.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed the school administrative-related factors are responsible for the persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools, such as: Poor condition of service of principals and teachers result to greed; persistent staff strike resulting to poor content coverage; poor content coverage by teachers due to laziness.; school administrators' over expectation from students in terms of high performance in examination; staff involved in examination malpractice in the past are rarely disciplined; lack of the fear of god among staff in their discharge of duties; and moral decline among students among others. The finding of the study is in consonance with the submission of Udoh (2011) who established a correlation between examination malpractice and corruption in public offices. This point was upheld by Olatunbosun, (2009) who revealed that examination malpractice is sustained by what sustains corruption as a dishonest or illegal behaviour especially of people in authority. The findings revealed other factors related to school administration agreed upon by the respondents as being responsible for the persistence of examination malpractice include; poor conditions of service of principals and teachers, persistent staff strike resulting to poor content coverage, lack of adequate infrastructure, recruitment of incompetent hands to handle administrative affairs and all these can be tied to corruption in public offices accounting for persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools.

The study also found that significant differences exist in the mean ratings of principals, teachers, students, and external examination officials on school administrative-related factors responsible for persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools. This means that significant difference exists between the categories of respondents' views. The study further revealed that although a significant difference exists between the various respondents, the principals and teachers do not differ significantly from each other as students and external examination officials do not also differ from each other on school administrative-related factors responsible for persistent examination malpractice in public secondary schools. This implied that principals, teachers and students, external examination officials do not view school administrated-related factors from the same perspective. Principals and teachers are more into school management unlike students and external examination officials. Corruption as a dishonest or illegal behaviour especially of people in authority can be said to give rise to diverse kinds of examination malpractices. Olatunbosun (2009) rightly found out that bribery and corruption are found in civil services, state-owned enterprises, hospitals, industries and of course educational institutions, ministries and parastatals.

Educational Implications for Adult Education

The study holds significant educational implications for adult education. To address the complex issue of malpractice, adult education programmes can take a proactive role in raising awareness and conducting sensitization programs aimed at parents, community leaders, and adult learners. These initiatives should emphasize the detrimental effects of examination malpractice on educational quality and advocate for a collective commitment to academic integrity. Furthermore, adult education can contribute to skill development by focusing on critical thinking, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making skills, and empowering learners to actively combat malpractices and positively contribute to the education system. In tandem, there is an opportunity for adult education to offer modules on parental involvement, ensuring that parents are equipped with the knowledge and strategies to support their children's education and reduce the likelihood of malpractices. Integrating courses on ethics and integrity into adult education curricula can instill a strong moral compass, emphasizing the importance of honesty in educational settings. Collaboration between adult education institutions and

educational authorities is crucial for the development of targeted programs aligning with broader reforms to curb examination malpractice. Moreover, adult education can serve as a platform for community advocacy against malpractices, turning adult learners into advocates for academic integrity. Offering professional development opportunities for educators within the realm of adult education can enhance ethical conduct, effective examination administration, and the creation of environments that discourage malpractices. Engaging adult learners in policy discussions and implementation efforts can amplify their role in advocating for policies that address administrative factors contributing to malpractice. Lastly, adult education scholars and practitioners can contribute to the discourse through research and publications, disseminating knowledge that fosters a deeper understanding and effective implementation of solutions. In sum, adult education, with its diverse interventions, has the potential to play a pivotal role in mitigating the educational implications of examination malpractice and fostering a culture of academic integrity in Adamawa State.

Contribution for Knowledge

The research study on examination malpractice in public secondary schools in Adamawa State contributes significantly to knowledge by providing a nuanced understanding of the specific administrative factors influencing the persistence of malpractice. Focused on the regional dynamics of Adamawa State, the study enriches the broader discourse on examination malpractice. Notably, it explores the implications of malpractice on adult education, offering insights into how adult education programs can address its aftermath and promote a culture of integrity. By proposing targeted policy recommendations and community engagement strategies, the study provides a holistic approach to educational reforms. The empirical data gathered serves as a foundation for evidence-based decision-making, and the examination of ethical considerations contributes to discussions on ethical conduct in educational institutions. Overall, the study builds a knowledge base for future research, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of interventions and strategies to combat examination malpractice.

Conclusion

The 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. This research delved deeply into the remote causes of persistent examination malpractice and revealed that the rising tide of the persistent examination crime could be overcome through the education stakeholders and students by exposing the school administrative factors, invigilators-related factors and external examination bodies-related factors sustaining the persistence of examination malpractices. The research has exposed veritable areas that should be henceforth given more attention. It has been seen how much could be achieved if government could improve the condition of service of public servants, if salaries of workers are paid promptly to forestall the desire of being fraudulent, infrastructure for example, examination halls, classrooms, furniture are adequately supplied by government, scholarship are given to brilliant students from poor economic background and religious leaders preaching contentment and the fear of God to their members, these may curb the menace. The essence of this work is to identify the administrative factors sustaining the persistent examination malpractice such that solution proffered could help overcome it.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Federal Government should launch a comprehensive anti-corruption initiative, targeting all tiers of governance. Stringent measures and appropriate sanctions should be applied to address laziness and corruption among staff at various levels.
2. Timely payment of salaries for both government and external examination bodies is essential to curb fraudulent activities. Ensuring prompt and regular salary disbursements can diminish the motivation for engaging in malpractices.
3. Full implementation of the Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) and adherence to the Minimum Wage (MW) are crucial steps to motivate and retain qualified educators. This can contribute to a more committed and ethically responsible teaching workforce.
4. Government should prioritize the provision of essential infrastructure, including examination halls, classrooms, and furniture. External examination bodies, especially in the area of transportation, should ensure that all necessary facilities for effective examination supervision are adequately supplied.
5. Education stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on teachers, must fulfil their responsibilities diligently. Teachers should prioritize covering their syllabuses thoroughly, reducing the temptation for students to resort to cheating as a means of compensating for uncovered course content. A concerted effort from all stakeholders is vital for fostering a culture of academic integrity in schools.

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