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### **Stakeholders' attitude towards examination malpractices in Senior High Schools in the Volta Region of Ghana**

#### **Abstract**

*This study, which is a survey, was designed to determine the attitude that the various education stakeholders have of examination malpractices. A sample of 600 educational stakeholders (comprising students, teachers, parents, school administrators) were drawn from 20 sampled public senior high schools in the Volta Region of Ghana using simple random, purposive, and stratified sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Data collected were treated with inferential statistics. Results of the study indicate that majority of education stakeholders' attitude towards examination malpractice is unfavourable, as they see it as a crime that needs to be fought, but a worrisome minority have favourable attitude towards examination malpractice as they perceive it as a means of rendering help, meeting high expectations, boosting school image, and compensating for school inadequacies, and not as a factor in lowering education standard and self-concept. It is recommended that the most effective and efficient intervention strategy to curb examination malpractice should be adopted to check this menace.*

#### **Introduction**

Examination has over the years become one of the basic characteristics of the school system. It is used as one of the important indices upon which many decisions about the learner, teacher and school are based. Thus, it is used to generate data for decision making about the examinee, the teacher and the school among others. In context, examination is the assessment of the examinee's performance or behaviour with the use of series of questions, problems, tasks or situations in order to ascertain the amount or level or nature of knowledge, skills, attitudes or other behaviours that the individual has acquired, the extent to which he/she is able to utilize them or their quality and effectiveness (Azuru, 2004). It could be oral or written. Examination serves a number of purposes including certification, selection and accountability among others. Hence any act that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination results and certification.

Unfortunately, nowadays the process of examination in Ghanaian secondary schools has been bedevilled with rampant malpractices (West Africa Examination Council [WAEC], 2003). Thus, "examination malpractices" have, unfortunately, become one of the regular expressions and daunting issues in our school systems, not only in Ghana, but also in all parts of the world.

According to Sooze (2004), examination malpractice (EM) is any wrong-doing before, during or after any examination. To Sooze (2004), examination malpractices are illegal means that students use to pass examinations. In the words of Azuru (2004), examination malpractice is any illegal act by the examinee or his agent(s) before, during or after examination with the intention of making the examinee have undue advantage or have an unmerited grade. Also the WAEC (2003) defines examination malpractice as any irregular behaviour exhibited by candidates or anybody charged with the responsibility of conducting examination in or outside the examination hall, before, during or after such examination.

Examination Malpractices Act of 1999 in Nigeria defines examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination

fraudulently secures any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued (Olatunbosun, 2009).

In Ghana, the last decade has witnessed an alarming rate of increase in incidence of examination misconduct. Evidence abounds of increased involvement in examination malpractices. Accusing fingers have been pointed at some stakeholders - students, teachers, parents and school administrations as well as invigilators as being agents of this canker (Ijaiya, 2007). The incidence of examination malpractices has become so widespread that there is virtually no examination anywhere in Ghana, at any level and outside the formal school system, that there is no one form of 'sharp practice' or the other (Ijaiya, 2007). Like HIV/AIDS, examination malpractice is real and common everywhere and every examination season witnesses the emergence of new and ingenious ways of cheating (Ijaiya, 2007).

The third president of the fourth republic of Ghana, the late Prof. J. E. A. Mills, described the spate of examination malpractices in the country as a disturbing development in the landscape of Ghana and appealed to civil society, the church and parents to help inculcate desirable noble and pure attitudes in students (Ghana News Agency, 2009).

#### **Literature review**

##### **The concepts of examination malpractices**

Examination malpractice has been defined and described variously by many authorities in the field of education. Chukwuemeka (1982) referred to examination malpractice as violation of examination rules and regulations by candidates. Obot (1997) defined examination malpractice as wrong (illegal/immoral) doing in terms of acts of commission or omission during the construction, custodianship, administration, marking and release of results of examination before, during or after such examinations. Jega (2006) saw examination malpractice as any form of misbehaviour that leads to the alteration of or a tampering with the prescribed ways of conducting examination in any given system. Joshua (2008, p.1) agrees that examination malpractice "is any unauthorized or unapproved action, inaction, activity, behaviour or practice that is associated with the preparation, conduct and process of examination and other forms of assessment and carried out by any person involved in preparing for, giving, taking and processing that examination at any level".

##### **Perpetrators of various forms of examination malpractice**

Examination malpractice is perpetrated by most stakeholders in the education sector of Ghana. Joshua (2009) identifies the following stakeholders:

- i. *The Students:* Most students are careless about culture of hard work and academic excellence, and so become ill-prepared for most examinations. Students no longer have confidence in themselves to write and pass any examination, without cheating
- ii. *The Teachers:* Some teachers help students during examination by bringing into examination rooms worked answers to the test items, writing the answers on the boards, and distracting invigilators/supervisors by offering refreshments in the teachers' offices during examinations to the officials. This is done with the sole aim of allowing the students to cheat at will during examinations with the full support and cooperation of teachers.
- iii. *Parents and Guardians:* Parents become syndicates in perpetuating examination malpractice. They provide monies to their children/wards for payment to different persons and agents of examination malpractice. Some parents go outright to negotiate with officials at examination centres to look the other way, and allow their wards to cheat in examination halls, or help in sending unauthorized materials to them. Some go directly to the examination bodies to negotiate higher scores for their children/wards.
- iv. *School Administrators:* Most school administrators in private, government and mission schools such as headmasters/headmistress, and principals often times are involved in

examination malpractice to maintain “100% pass” in public examinations. Again, most proprietors of private schools get involved in examination malpractices of various forms to increase enrolment for their personal financial benefits or maintain the popularity in/of their schools.

- v. *The Government:* The government at various levels also contributes indirectly to encourage examination malpractice in areas of poor condition of service to teachers, and setting unrealistic and intimidation standards/expectations. Teachers are very poorly paid and so often engage in long strikes which often result in pupils/students staying more at home than being in schools, yet they have to face public examinations. For face-saving some governments require their heads of schools to record certain percentage pass by students in their schools or face sack, demotion or stagnation. Such policy definitely encourages cheating by the heads.
- vi. *The Society:* Society views certificate as evidence or proof of knowledge, rather than skills exhibition. Every parent is eager to see his/her child obtain 5-10 credits at O’ level at a sitting. Parents are in a hurry, and so pay extra for their children to go to rural areas to register for examinations where cheating is at a very high rate.
- vii. *Examination Bodies/Invigilators:* Many examination officers who conduct examinations for the West African Examination Council WAEC and other examination bodies are perpetrators of examination malpractice. Money is at the centre of the many reasons these officers refuse to adhere to examination ethics.
- viii. *Poor/Inadequate Infrastructure:* Most examination halls are grossly inadequate for examinations; no adequate writing desks, no adequate lighting, no good ventilation etc. Most often, overcrowding and discomfort due to poor facilities aid cheating in examination.
- ix. *The Law Enforcement Agents:* The law enforcement agents such as the police personnel often drafted to maintain discipline, keep rules and regulations, are often involved in examination malpractice. They collect large sums of money from students and school authorities to allow students to cheat during examinations (Joshua, 2009). This in itself is very disappointing for a developing nation like Ghana.

From the forgoing submissions in the literature, examination malpractice is noted as fraud within the school system, and does occur at all levels of education, right from the basic level, through secondary to the tertiary levels of education in Ghana. In fact, examination malpractice is a peculiar ‘corrupt practice’ within the educational system. This practice is thriving strongly in our system, irrespective of religious affiliations of the various stakeholders in the school system, thus making it a real “monster” (Joshua, 2009). This concept is a real monster because the culture of hard work, academic excellence, honesty, decency are fast eroding the present generation of youths in different institutions of learning (Joshua, 2009). Examination malpractice, tends to weaken the validity of any examination, and to make examination results worthless and unreliable. Actually examination malpractice produces “error scores” in examinations, where students earn marks/scores above/below their abilities, and the long term effect is wrong placement in schools and employment of unskilled workers into various sectors of the economy.

#### **Statement of the problem**

Attitude denotes the sum of man’s inclinations and feelings, ideas, fears, and threats about a specific topic (Oppenheim, 1992). In the words of Aggarwal (2005), prediction becomes accurate depending on how strong attitude is, how directly relevant the attitude is to the situation, and the amount of pressure exerted on the situation. Therefore the importance of attitude and its effects on behaviour cannot be over-emphasized. Societal attitude towards a behaviour will give room to the individual and other members of the society to repeat or extinct the behaviour. In the school system, the attitude of the operators of the system will most likely nurture or threaten examination malpractice.

In the 2009 private West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination WASSCE, the Daily Graphic reported the cancellation of some examination papers following the suspicion that there had been a leakage of examination items/questions. Again in 2009, WAEC published names of candidates involved in examination malpractices in the newspapers (Ghana News Agency [G.N.A], 2009). The move was to address the increasing incidence of examination malpractices in the country (G.N.A, 2009). Yet, the situation does not seem to change.

It can be seen that most efforts being made to curb examination malpractices in the country appear not to be yielding appreciable result. Examination malpractice is behaviour; and behaviours are influenced by attitudes. Could it be that the attitude of key players in the Ghanaian school system towards examination malpractice plays a role in sustaining or encouraging this social menace? What really is the attitude of education stakeholders towards these malpractices in these examinations? Answers to these posers are not readily available in the Ghanaian school system. Therefore finding empirically supported answers to these questions constituted the problem that this study was designed to address.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the attitude of education stakeholders towards examination malpractice. The specific research objectives were to:

1. Find out the attitude of education stakeholders towards examination malpractices.
2. Find out the differences in attitude towards examination malpractice that exist among stakeholders.

#### **Hypothesis**

1. H<sub>0</sub>: The attitude that education stakeholders have of EM in relation to the selected objects/aspects of attitude is not significantly high.  
H<sub>1</sub>: The attitude that education stakeholders have of EM in relation to the selected objects/aspects of attitude is significantly high.
2. H<sub>0</sub>: Education stakeholders' attitude of EM does not significantly vary with the category of the stakeholders.  
H<sub>1</sub>: education stakeholders' attitude of EM does vary significantly with the category of the stakeholders.

#### **Significance of the study**

Policy makers will be aware of these various attitudes of the stakeholders so that they can come out with effective and efficient policies to curb the menace of examination malpractices. The findings in this study will shed light on how attitude influences stakeholders' intentions to cheat and cheating behaviour in an examination. Thirdly, the findings in the study will help examination bodies such as WAEC to know the calibre of teachers to involve during invigilation.

#### **Methodology**

The sample for the study consisted of 600 education stakeholders, made up of 200 students, 174 teachers, 186 parents and 40 school administrators. The proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to selection students, teachers and parents. The purposive sampling was used to select the administrators.

Data collection was effected through a researcher-constructed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A had six items that sought for demographic data, while Section B had 20 items, with three items on each of the five objects of perception of EM. The items were of the 4-point Likert scale with responses of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree', scored 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively for positively worded questions and the reverse for negatively worded questions. The research instrument yielded a reliability index (Cronbach Alpha) of .89 and .87 on the two parts of Section B. Data collection was carried out personally by the researcher, with the

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help of assistants in the persons of assistance headmaster, class teachers, school/class prefects and students themselves (especially in reaching their parents).The data collected were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Results**

There were five (5) objects or aspects of attitude of EM. Four (4) questionnaire items were formulated on each of these objects and strategies. Responses to these four items were summed up to constitute the opinion or perception of the respondents on each of these objects of attitude. Percentages, population t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were the analysis techniques deployed to test the study hypotheses and the interpretation are presented hypothesis-by-hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 1*

The attitude that education stakeholders have of EM in relation to the selected objects/aspects of attitude is not significantly high. In testing this hypothesis, the sample mean (from the four items on each object) was compared with a referenced (or population) mean score using population t-test analysis. The reference mean score was obtained by multiplying the average of the scores attached to the four responses to questionnaire items by the number of items, i.e. Reference Mean =  $1/6(6+5+4+3+2+1) \times 4 = 14.0$

**Table 1: Population t-test Analysis of Stakeholders’ Attitude towards Examination Malpractices**

<i>Attitude towards E.M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sample mean</i>	<i>Sample SD</i>	<i>Ref mean</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Ave % agree</i>	<i>Ave% Disagree</i>
i). As a means of rendering help/service	600	8.95	5.21	14.0	-23.76*	.00	39	61
ii) Means of meeting high expectation	600	10.34	3.59	14.0	-24.98*	.00	20	80
iii)A means of boosting school image	600	8.75	4.93	14.0	-26.12*	.00	17	83
iv) A means of Compensating For inadequate facilities/teaching	600	9.46	4.79	14.0	-23.23*	.00	30	70
v) Lowering standard of education	600	18.99	4.30	14.0	28.40*	.00	79	24

\*p< .05; critical = 1.96; df = 599

The results in Table 1 shows that all the five calculated t-values (absolute values) are each greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 599 degrees of freedom. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected in all the five instances. However, the negative t-values for objects (i) – (iv) imply that stakeholders’ attitude towards EM is significantly low; while the positive t-value for (v) implies that the respondents’ attitude of EM is significantly high. Using non statistical terms, the results of the analysis indicate that most of the stakeholders do not perceive EM as (i) a means of rendering help to fellow humans (61% disagreed), (ii) a means of meeting high expectations (80% disagreed), (iii) a means of boosting image of the school (83% disagreed), and (iv) a means of compensation for inadequate facilities/teaching (70% disagree). Nonetheless stakeholders perceived EM as a factor in lowering the standard of education (79% agreed to this). It should also be noted from the table that 39% of the education stakeholders agreed that EM is a means of rendering help to fellow humans, 20% of them agreed that EM is a means of meeting high expectations from parents, society, schools. etc, 17% of them agreed that EM is a means of boosting the image of the school and its functionaries, 30% of them agreed that EM is a means of compensating for the inadequate facilities/teaching in the school; and 24% of them disagreed that EM is a factor that is contributing to lowering standard of education.

*Hypothesis 2*

Education stakeholders' attitude of EM does not significantly vary with the category of the stakeholders. The statistical analysis technique employed to test this hypothesis was one way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA). The result of the analysis is presented in Table 14.

**Table 2:One-Way Analysis of Variance of Influence of Category of Stakeholders on Attitude of Examination Malpractice**

<i>Attitude of stakeholders towards E.M</i>	<i>Category of stakeholders</i>	<i>of No</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>Sig level</i>
i) As a means of rendering help	Administrators	40	5.76(1)	.83	60.54*	.00
	Teachers	186	5.52(2)	.66		
	Parents	174	4.38(3)	1.28		
	Students	200	4.19(4)	1.40		
	Total	600	4.76	1.3		
ii) Means of meeting high expectation	Administrators	40	5.17(2)	.13	29.27*	.00
	Teachers	186	5.23(1)	.06		
	Parents	174	4.44(3)	.08		
	Students	200	4.32(4)	.92		
	Total	600	4.69	.04		
iii)A way of survival in school	Administrators	40	5.52(1)	1.01	29.58*	.00
	Teachers	186	5.35(2)	.06		
	Parents	174	4.51(3)	.10		
	Students	200	4.44(4)	.09		
	Total	600	4.81	.05		
iv) Means of compensation for poor teaching	Administrators	40	5.45(1)	.78	52.04*	.00
	Teachers	186	5.30(2)	.76		
	Parents	174	4.34(3)	1.21		
	Students	200	4.11(4)	1.22		
	Total	600	4.64	1.20		
v)Lowering the standard of education	Administrators	40	4.79(2)	1.10	11.66*	.00
	Teachers	186	5.11(1)	.79		
	Parents	174	4.53(4)	1.10		
	Students	200	4.59(3)	1.19		
	Total	600	4.75	1.08		

\*p<.05; df = 3,596

Table 2 have showed that all the calculated F- value for different aspects/ objects of attitude are each higher than the critical F-value of 2.61 at .05 level of significance, with 3 and 596 degrees of freedom. Again the significance level for each is .00 which is less than the alpha level of .05.

The table indicates the differences among stakeholder's attitude towards examination malpractice. The ranks as given to the mean values shown in the parenthesis in Table 2 indicate;

- i. Administrations are the first in their attitude towards examination malpractices as “a means of rendering help to fellow human being”, followed by teachers, and then by parents and then by students.
- ii. Teachers are the first in their attitude towards examination malpractices as “a means of meeting high expectation” followed by administrators and then by parents, and lastly by students.
- iii. As a way of survival in school system, administrators are the first in that attitude, followed by teachers and then by parents and lastly by students.

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- iv. Administrators again are the first in the attitude “as a means of compensating for poor teaching and inadequate teaching facility”, followed by teachers, then by parents, and lastly by students.
- v. Lowering the standard of education; teachers take the lead in that aspect of attitude towards examination malpractices followed by school administrators then by students, and lastly by parents.

As identified in Table 3, all the calculated F-values are each greater than the critical F-value of 3.78 at 3 and 596 degrees of freedom. Again, the result produced a significant level of .00 which is less than the alpha level of .05. Consequently, the null hypothesis “Education stakeholders’ attitude towards examination malpractices does not significantly vary with the category of the stakeholder” is rejected.

### **Discussions**

Perhaps the frightening aspects of the results of this study that is, or should be worrisome and that should concern all stakeholders in the education industry, are the percentages of agreement/disagreement. The majority of the stakeholders in the sample disagreed that EM is a means of rendering help to fellow humans, meeting high expectations, boosting school image and compensating for inadequate facilities/teaching; and this is commendable. As much as 39% of the stakeholders perceive EM as a means of rendering help to fellow humans. This percentage, though reflecting minority position, is very worrisome. Thus, when people cheat in examinations, or facilitate EM, they believe they are rendering help, and perhaps believe/expect they should rather be commended or celebrated for doing so. This finding on EM as rendering help is in agreement with those of Adebayo (2002) and Obo (2008). However, whoever holds this view (of EM as help) will hardly stop it as he/she may be propelled by self/intrinsic motivation to help their children (if parents, their students ) (if teachers/school administrators) or their friends and neighbours (if students) through EM to jump the hurdle of examination and possess the needed credentials. It is surprising that administrators took the first position in seeing EM as a means of rendering help, followed by parents (under Hypothesis 2). This is greatly worrisome.

Another finding showed that as much as 20% of the sample identified EM as a means of meeting high expectations from parents and society, etc; and 17% perceived EM as a means of boosting the school image. This finding tends to explain the situation where public examination candidates, supported by their parents /guardians and with the connivance of school administrators, buy examination papers so that their schools should be noted for academic excellencies with 10 credits, 9 ‘alphas’ etc. it is then no wonder that school administrators took the first positions as they recognize EM as means of rendering help, boosting school image, and also as a means of compensating for inadequate facilities/teaching (under hypothesis 2).

The result also showed that 30% of the stakeholders in the sample perceived EM as a means of compensating for inadequate facilities/teaching in schools. Thus, instead of bringing pressure on relevant authorities to provide teaching and learning, school administrations and teachers resort to EM to cover up these inadequacies, and also to cover up their poor teaching, non- completion of syllabuses, non/poor exposure of students to relevant practical, etc. Also, 24% of the respondents did not see EM as a factor in lowering standard of education. These findings collaborate those of Obo (2008). It is not surprising then that those students, who are at the receiving end in the schools, followed by their parents disagreed that EM does lower standard of education. Thus, when students are face-to-face with examinations, and they have a feeling of inadequate preparation (either by the school or by themselves), they resort to EM, sometimes supported by their parents.

These findings are very worrisome. This is so because Denga (1983) had warned that EM was further enhanced by the prevailing attitudes of most education stakeholders and their perception of the said issue. Perhaps, EM has thrived for so long in the school system; despite the various actions by successive governments to curb it, mainly because of the attitudes and perceptions held by various stakeholders concerning this monster called examination malpractice. Really, fighting examination

malpractice in all its ramifications is a serious, urgent and demanding challenge on all stakeholders in the education industry of our nation, to eradicate it, if it's devastating effect not to be allowed to bring irreparable consequences unto our educational system and the nation at large.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that most education stakeholders abhor the presence of EM and the damage caused by it in our school systems, and are ready to cooperate with relevant authorities to fight the menace to minimise its damaging effect. However, there is a worrisome proportion of the stakeholders who hold and manifest attitudes, perceptions and practices that really nurture the perpetration of this menace and invariably threaten the success of the fight against it. Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. More vigorous public campaigns/advocacy should be mounted through the mass media and in churches/mosques, schools, other social religious/political gatherings on the danger and damage of EM
2. Serious instant sanctions should be visited on confirmed victims, perpetrators, supporters and sponsors of EM
3. Students, teachers, school administrators and other public officers who fight and/or expose EM and its perpetrators should be recognised publicly with appropriate rewards
4. School supervision (internal and external) should be intensified to ensure that teachers and school administrators do their work and that students are properly and appropriately taught
5. Employers should insist on practical skills to back up paper qualifications during recruitment exercises, as this will send appropriate signals to the learners in the schools

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