

Selected Primary Schools' Compliance in Prevention of Examination Malpractices in National Examinations in Solwezi District, Zambia

^{1*}Crispin Kukano; ^{2*}Chrine, C. Hapompwe; ^{3*}Jacqueline Siwale & ^{4*}Sianga Mukololo Brian

¹Lecturer; Cavendish University Zambia, Faculty of Arts, Education & Social Sciences

²Lecturer; Cavendish University Zambia, Faculty of Arts, Education & Social Sciences

³Lecturer; Cavendish University Zambia, Faculty of Business and Information Technology

⁴Lecturer; Chalimbana University, Department of Education Leadership and Management

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Abstract- This study assessed stakeholders' compliance in the prevention of examination malpractices in selected primary schools in Solwezi district, North Western Zambia. Employing a survey research design, the study population comprised all head teachers, teachers and parent teachers' committee chairpersons in primary schools in Solwezi district. The sample size of the study was 36 respondents which comprised 30 teachers; 3 head teachers and 3 Parents Teachers' Committee Chairpersons. These were selected using stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were used as data collection techniques. The findings revealed that lack of *self-confidence* in examinations, *excessive exposure to electronic gadgets* by pupils and *immorality* among teachers and learners contributed to lack of compliance in the prevention of national examination malpractices. The study also established that the net effect of lack of compliance in the prevention of examination malpractices were irreversible loss of credibility and grave consequences in future employment opportunities. However, it was also found that provision stiff punishment to culprits and good remuneration to examination officers can help curb examination malpractice in schools. Therefore, it was recommended that aggressive campaigns educating all the stakeholders about the dangers of examination malpractices needed to be mounted coupled with appropriate policy change in the way examinations are structured such as by integrating systematic continuous assessment programs ending with final examinations.

Index Terms- Assessment, Compliance, Examinations, Malpractice, Prevention, Primary Schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation upon which technological and national developments rest. It prepares the young generation for future challenges and abilities on how to manage them. While examination is a mechanism through which knowledge and skill acquisitions are tested. Chileshe (2010) explains that examinations are a way of ascertaining how much subject matter in a particular field of study a candidate has mastered. Teachers and other examination administrators have a role to ensure that no candidate

has undue advantage over another thereby identifying as to who really has acquired the necessary skills and knowledge. Maheka (2015) points out that examinations are an assessment intended to measure knowledge, skill, attitude, physical fitness or classification in many other topics such as beliefs. An examination could also be seen as one of the most objective techniques used in the measurement of learning outcomes at all levels of education in Zambia and the world over. The Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) conducts the examinations, evaluates the candidates, issues mark sheets and publishes the results. ECZ has set rules and regulations which set equivalent conditions for the examinations so that there is fairness for all those taking the examinations. This is because examinations provide discriminatory criteria for individuals and society in the allocation of scarce opportunities in the society.

Cheating in examinations has become a global concern. Some see it as the outcome of the backwash effects of examination. Examination malpractice in Zambia has attained a frightening proportion and the malpractices are sophisticated and institutionalized (Chileshe, 2010). Efforts by government administration and stakeholders in the educational sector to curtail the ugly trend have not yielded any fruit. The nature of examination malpractice has resulted in high turnover of incompetent graduates by institutions of higher learning. Due to concerns on increasing cases of malpractices the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) introduced measures to curb the malpractices. While announcing the measures ECZ (2011) observed that the council has put in place measures to curb examination irregularities and ensure the credibility of national examinations and certificates are maintained. However, the compliance in the prevention of examination malpractices seemingly is not adhered to by stakeholders.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Actions and practices that undermine the integrity of the examination process pose a serious threat to the quality and credibility of the students' learning outcomes ECZ (2011). Examination malpractices are an example of such actions that threaten the integrity of examinations, and damage the authority of those responsible for conducting them. Examination malpractices are also a threat to the validity and reliability of the

education system. They are harmful not only to the moral development, but also the intellectual development of learners. Examination malpractices are a serious and growing problem in Zambia. They have become widespread to the extent that there is virtually no examination without incidences of malpractice (Chileshe, 2010). Statistics stipulate that 315 cases were recorded in the 2012 grade 12 examinations compared to 267 cases in 2011 countrywide. As a result, some candidates had their results nullified. Despite the nullification of the results, those who were alleged to have assisted the cheating candidates were never pursued (ECZ, 2011). On the other hand, the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) in its 2016 briefing noted that Three Hundred and Ninety Eighty (398) cases of examination malpractices were reported. Of this number, Two Hundred and Twelve (212) were reported for the 2016 examinations and One Hundred and Eighty-Six (186) were reported for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) in 2016 examinations. The examination body noted that the malpractices in the 2016 examination year ranged from smuggled un-authorized material, assistance during the examinations, having prior knowledge of the examination and copying (ECZ, 2017). There are rules, guidelines and regulations by the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) in place to prevent the occurrence of examination malpractices whether by candidates or examination officers but there seems to be lack of compliance to enforce the same especially at school levels. This necessitates the need to assess the levels of compliance in examination malpractice prevention by stakeholders at school levels.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chileshe (2010) points out that Zambia's education is haunted with examinations leakages. This view is in agreement with Maheka's (2015) argument that cheating in examinations is not new in Zambian schools and incidences of examination malpractices in schools have become a major problem. Over the years the system evolved based on examination as a means of selecting a few Zambians to access other opportunities. Furthermore, increased pressure from the community on pupils to perform better in academics regardless of their abilities and academic history encourage examination malpractices (Chileshe, 2010). Parents, guardians, teachers, and friends want to see their wards get good marks during the initial years of their education in the hope that they would go to college or universities and get high paying jobs.

Eunice et al. (2014) conducted a study on 'Effectiveness of Examination Handling and Distribution Procedures in Curbing Malpractices in Secondary Schools in Eastern Province, Kenya'. The study sought to determine the effectiveness of the examination handling and distribution procedures in addressing the examination malpractices. A sample size of 511 subjects was involved in the study. The study was conducted using descriptive survey research design. Reliability of instruments was determined using Cronbach coefficient alpha method. The study established that the management of the examinations was dominated by the male gender. Handling and distribution of examinations was blamed for examinations malpractices. The researcher recommended training for all personnel involved in the management of the examinations

Additionally, Oluyomi (2016) conducted a study on 'Pragmatic Techniques of Curbing Examination Malpractices in Secondary Schools in Nigeria'. Annually, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) withholds and cancels thousands of students' results as a result of examination malpractices. Causes of examination malpractices were traced to students, teachers, parents and examination officers. Low intellectual ability, poor attitude to learning, peer pressure, crave for dishonest gains, parental pressure and laxity on external supervisor's part are some specific causes. The resultant effects include loss of credibility of certificates and blacklisting of schools. Recommendations were made on pragmatic ways of curbing the menace. These include personal determination, values education training, orientation for parents, use of computer-based tests and biometric verification.

Furthermore, Chinyere (2014) conducted a study on 'Curbing Examination Malpractices in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations in Nigeria'. The study assessed whether a student merits being promoted to another level. In industries, experts in human relations and employment bureau utilize tests in reaching a decision as to the employment of an individual. Despite the strategic importance of examination or test taking for diagnostic placement, classification and quality control in Nigerian institutions, the integrity and credibility of public examinations have been greatly eroded and corrupted with increasing incidence of examination malpractice, trends in examination malpractice in Nigeria, forms of examination malpractice, causes of examination malpractice, efforts made to eradicate examination malpractice and some recommendations were made. The study concluded by pointing out the following as curbing strategies: appointment of renowned clergies as invigilators and supervisors, empowerment of teachers, less emphasis on certificates and paper qualification, moral upbringing of children, creation of learning friendly environment in schools, employment of qualified teachers at all levels of education and planting of secret cameras in the examination halls. Chinyere (2014) further states that Indian education authorities rusticated 600 high school students for cheating during examinations and educational authorities in eastern India took decision to expel the students after images of family relatives and friends, scaling the walls of a school examination center to pass notes to candidates were broadcast on local television.

On the other hand, Adams et al. (2013) conducted a study on 'Stakeholders' Role in Curbing Examination Malpractice in Nigeria'. This study looked into the roles of some stakeholders in effectively curbing examination malpractices in Nigeria. Examination as an instrument for decision-making, always create fear and anxiety in the heart of the candidates and other stakeholders, a major reason, why some candidates and some other stakeholders engage in examination malpractices. To eradicate this menace in our examining system, all stakeholders must jointly fight against examination frauds. The suggested roles of the stakeholders eliminating this menace are: the government should introduce effective and comprehensive legislation, provide stringent penalties against the use of unfair means in examinations. The government should also ensure that anybody caught in the act of examination malpractices is adequately punished irrespective of his or her status or position in society. The various examining bodies should collaborate to build large examination halls across the nation. They should also collaborate with communities,

government, and corporate bodies in building large examination halls. Teachers should ensure that they adequately cover the syllabi, work to their conscience by ensuring that they attend school and classes regularly and endeavor to bring the content of the study to real life situation with the use of relevant teaching materials. Parents should provide all the necessary materials including textbooks that will help improve students' performances, pay unscheduled visits to their children to ascertain whether they are making progress or not. It was equally suggested that parents/guardians should establish a positive parent child relationship with their children for the progress of their wards.

Achio, Ameko and Kutsanedzie (2012) conducted a study on 'concerns on issues of examination malpractices a case study of Accra polytechnic: Examination malpractice contravenes the rules and regulations set by examination bodies'. This research looked at the forms, the factors and key players in examination malpractices, as well as the consequences and measures to combat this menace. Administering of questionnaires using random sampling, and analysis of collected data were done. 90 out of the 96 sampled-staff in Accra Polytechnic responded. Results revealed that most of the leakages came from candidates' peers (66.7 %). The common forms of examination malpractice included writings on items (100%) and on candidates' bodies (83.3 %). From 2000 to 2011 the various forms of examination malpractices increased from 5 to 12. About 37 % of the respondents had ever been involved in a malpractice; and 94.5 % confessed that examination malpractice is bad. There was no correlation between the ages or gender and involvement in examination malpractices. As students become more confident in their abilities to do well in their examination, their need for cheating would be reduced. With the high proportion of students who currently cheat, the examinations suffer from lack of validity because high scores could indicate either high ability or having sophisticated cheating procedures, less examination malpractice would then increase the validity of the examinations because students who perform well on the examinations would be the students who would have the highest ability.

Iqbal, Muhammad and Jangrai (2012) conducted a study on 'Teachers' Perception Regarding Malpractices used in Examinations in Urban areas of District Peshawar'. The study aimed at investigating factors associated with malpractices used in Secondary School Certificate Examination in the Urban Areas of District Peshawar. The main objectives of the study were to gather information from teachers about various cheating techniques used in examinations and know main factors that force students to cheat in examinations. Twenty (20) educational institutions for boys, including public and private, were purposively selected from urban areas of District Peshawar for the data collection. Questionnaires were distributed among 60 teachers of sampled High and Higher Secondary Schools in order to collect data. Majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that students usually use small chits as cheating technique in S.S.C. examination as they considered it safer and easier to hide from the examination conducting staff. The study further showed that the board officials, colleagues of the duty staff (examination conducting staff), fear of stopping of annual increments, pressure from the higher authority, poor standard of teaching, parents, and well reputation of institutions were key factors responsible for cheating in Secondary School Certificate Examination in urban areas of district

Peshawar. An encouraging aspect of the study is also that the principals of the institutions were not involved in this unfair activity.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to assess stakeholder's compliance in the management of examination malpractices in selected primary schools of Solwezi District. To this end, this study adopted a qualitative research design because it allows human beings make sense of their experiences, design the process of meaning and explain how they interpret their lived experiences (Merriam, 2009). It also empowers the researcher, as in this study, to be the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). Precisely, a descriptive survey design was used incorporating interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) as data collection tools. These data collection techniques allowed for triangulation, ensured validity and trustworthiness of the investigation (Flick, 2014). In line with the argument that using only one focus group discussion leads to inhibition of acquiring the much needed alternative views in relation to the subject under investigation (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), data were collected from three six-member focus groups. It involved obtaining information concerning the current status of a phenomena to describe 'what exists' with respect to variables or condition in the situation (Cohen et al, 2012) and understanding of human activities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Such understanding is not pursued as an end in itself but as a means to an end in highlighting significant problems thus improve on practice. This is in agreement with the aim of this study and justifies the use of this design. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate as all three schools had similar experiences. The assumption was that their knowledge on examination malpractice was comparable. The sample comprised three head teachers of selected primary schools, 30 teachers and 3 members of the PTC. The number of malpractices per school were used as a basis in selecting the school. Thirty (30) teachers were picked at random. Lottery draws were used to get a wider representative sample of participants and everyone with similar characteristics in the sample had an equal chance for being selected. To achieve this, a list of all teachers in three selected schools were generated using each school staff establishment. From the lists, stratification and simple random sampling were used as techniques to obtain 10 teachers per school to add to the 30 sample size. Pieces of papers were numbered from one up to the last number of teachers per school then folded and thoroughly mixed in a box. Raffle draw was conducted in which only those who picked numbers 1 to 10 constituted the sample per school. This sampling method was significant in this research because it gave every teacher in the selected schools an equal opportunity to be picked (Patton, 2015).

Data was analysed using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) as well as Tesch's open coding method (Vogt et al, 2014:26). This approach involved the use of inductive processes of examining, categorizing, and comparing, synthesizing and interpreting data for credible explanations in addressing the major aim of this investigation. These categories were given names derived from the actual terms used by the participants (Saunders et al., 2007). From emergent categories, sub-categories were further recognized and defined. This method

is in line with the view that qualitative data analysis is basically an inductive process of dividing data into groups and determining the meaning of each group of sentences for plausible explanations (Creswell, 2012). Ethical considerations were given effect by seeking permission to conduct the study from the North Western Province Education Office and undertaking to maintain anonymity, confidentiality, beneficence, informed consent and privacy regarding the participants and their schools. The aim of the study was explained to the participants and they were informed that should they feel uncomfortable during the interviews they were free to withdraw (Delpont et al, 2016).

IV. FINDINGS

The analysis of data produced the following broad themes: lack of self-confidence in examinations, excessive exposure to electronic gadgets and immorality among teachers and learners. For ease of discussion, these major themes are presented separately below.

1.2. Lack of self-confidence in examinations by Candidates

All respondents indicated that the examinations were set based on the content of the syllabus covered by learners in the academic year. None of the respondents knew whether the syllabus was adequately covered to consider learners ready for examinations. Ironically, all the respondents who participated in the study also did not know whether the learners who had passion for school have high self confidence in the examinations both local and national examinations. One respondent remarked: *Examination malpractice is common in schools because a lot of learners lack self confidence in writing examinations without cheating.* This view was consolidated by another respondent who remarked that learners were not serious with their education as it used to be in the colonial times a trend that has caused the increase in examination malpractice in schools. In a similar vein, the teachers that were interviewed expressed similar views with the head teachers that learners lacked self confidence in examinations because most of the learners are never ready for examinations in schools. The study revealed that in principle learners who had passion for school have high self confidence in the examinations both local and national examinations but in practice most of the learners are never ready for examinations in schools.

1.3. Excessive exposure to electronic gadgets

Virtually all the respondents indicated that technological advancement has contributed to efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of education. Although the study found that advancements in technology has positively contributed to education, only a minority of the respondents indicated that technological exposure has robbed them time to concentrate on study. In this regard, one respondent remarked:

- Learners in most of the homes don't study, where ever you go you only see children playing with the phone.
- Learners have little time to study but devotes more time to play with various gadgets such as phone, video games, and computers.

Clearly, if parents and teachers devised strategies to encourage learners to study and prepare for examinations, there would be reduction in malpractice. The most predominant reason majority of respondents cited as reason for lack of quality time for study was the excessive use of gadgets. Majority of respondents indicated that learners have stopped using libraries in schools and claim gadgets to be their libraries. However, it was further revealed that instead of studying using their gadgets, learners spend more time on YouTube watching videos and on face book and WhatsApp chatting.

In view of the above reasons and a wide use of technology gadgets by learners, the majority of respondents revealed that learners lacked self confidence in examinations because most of the learners are never ready for examinations in schools. This gives credence to the perception of the majority of the interviewed respondents that learners in most schools have a common trend of not being ready for examinations because of excessive exposure to the use of gadgets.

1.4. Immorality among teachers and learners

What appeared as the main barrier to effective management of examinations is the general despondency of the respondents regarding challenges posed by the teacher –learner relationships which are a common feature in most schools. This has also contributed to learners not putting much effort in their studies. Not a single respondent felt there was anything they could do, especially in discouraging teachers from interacting with learners in their schools. The study revealed that many are times when learners fall in sexual relationship with teachers who plague to pay sexual favours with some learners in exchange with examination leakages. Common statements that were expressed are reflected in the following remarks:

- Some male teachers fall in love with the girl children and demand sexual favours in exchange with examination leakages.
- When such arrangements occur, learners tend to be lazy in studying with assurance that they will be given examination leakages by the friend teachers.
- Some teachers sell leaked examination papers to children who come from well-to-do families. They then share with other colleagues and friends.

Over all, the findings of the study revealed that peer pressure, laziness and inadequate preparation, ease of access to leaked examination materials, corruption, over enrolment in schools, fear of failure, spoon feeding mentality, examination oriented teaching were some of the factors that affect compliance in the management of examinations malpractice.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that the factors that contribute to examination malpractices in primary schools are essentially laziness, inadequate preparation, and poor remuneration for teachers, school administrators and education officials. The above factors tally closely with the findings of Ivowi (1997) in Nigeria. The same study also revealed the following as the nature of Examination Malpractices: smuggling answers into the examination room, teachers aiding pupils, leakage, copying,

substituting answers, impersonation, inflating marks for practical's and projects, supply of extra answer sheets by teachers, favoritism and carelessness in marking by teachers.

Parental pressure is also a factor that all the respondents in the research agreed as being significant in leading to examination malpractices. This factor is quite complex in that it is governed by multi-faceted motives. Firstly, most parents are aware that a lot of candidates engage in examination malpractices. With this awareness, these parents would not wish their own children to be disadvantaged by their peers` seemingly excellent but fraudulent results. The respondents also contended that some parents had an almost obsessive desire for their children to attain what they themselves failed to achieve. This category of parents are prepared to go to any length, including sponsoring examination malpractices to ensure that their children obtain excellent results and then bask in the reflected glory. To the parents who engage in these immoral acts, the fact that their children may be capable of attaining good results unaided by leakages etc. is immaterial. It is unanimously believed by all the respondents that the over emphasis on academic results by both the government and society has created a highly competitive environment in the whole education sector. This inevitably creates pressure to excel which may lead to the use of unacceptable methods and illegal practices, sometimes with the full knowledge of education officials and school administrators. All the respondents agreed that the practice of examination oriented teaching does contribute significantly to examination malpractices. This approach to teaching totally disregards the need for the candidate to attain a deep understanding of the content of the subjects. The teachers instead focus on guessing or calculating the likely questions that may come in the examinations. This compels the teachers, in their quest to cover all the likely questions, to engage in examination malpractices.

The habit of cheating also does not spare intelligent pupils because genuinely studying to obtain better results is, without exception, very demanding hence most pupils succumb to the lure of cheating. This situation impacts negatively on the academic progress of the pupils such that they are hardly ever ready for examinations, forcing them to seek other means, often illegal, to make up. Majority of respondents pointed out that fear of failure, which affect both pupils and teachers is a serious factor leading to examination malpractices. This arises due to a number of factors, the most prominent being the inherent desire in a human being to succeed. Each pupil looks forward to a successful career with a well-paying job. Pride also causes fear of failure. In order not to be viewed as a failure by friends and relatives some pupils will go to any length to succeed in examinations. Even if it means engaging in examination malpractices just to preserve their reputation among peers and relatives.

As for the teachers, in order to avoid the shame of being an under performer, they do engage in examination malpractices. Stakeholders believe poor quality teaching, often leading to failure to complete the syllabus, leads to examination malpractices. The quality of teaching is negatively affected by inadequate facilities, which is the norm in most public schools. Teachers who fail to meet up to the authorities` required standard for getting a reward end up employing other desperate means, often illegal, to boost the performance of their candidates. The issue of limited places in institutions of higher learning, resulting in only a certain

percentage of pupils who pass to proceed to higher levels, is a view advocated by the pupils as a catalyst for examination malpractices.

VI. CONCLUSION

The effects of examination malpractices according to the research findings were promotion of laziness, compromised education system in the country, misleading results, national underdevelopment, encourages corruption, absenteeism by pupil's increases, pupils lose self-confidence and finally pupils lose respect for higher authorities. This study revealed that staff and students believe that examination malpractice and fraud is not a major problem among higher education institutions. The respondents highlighted that the major causes of examination malpractice in primary schools could be fear of failure, inadequate teaching and learning materials and inadequate preparation for examinations. The most serious effects of examination malpractice are increase in the production of half-baked graduates, lowering of academic standards and lack of confidence in the academic certificates. Other effects include breeding of a generation of fraudsters and other social vices and the discouragement of hard work among students.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed measures to curb examination malpractices were also inferred from the responses in the interviews. The measure to help compliance in examination malpractice prevention could be provision of measures such as extra security, use of hi-tech methods, for example surveillance cameras to monitor the goings on in the examination rooms; measures to educate masses on dangers of examination malpractices; measures to upgrade school standards all round i.e. infrastructure, surroundings in general and teaching quality ; the efficient management of the examination process and finally the government, through the education system, not to rely only on final examination results but to consider introducing continuous assessments as part of final score and also to introduce more practical subjects. This study has successfully re-affirmed the findings by other researchers, as contained in the literature reviews of various countries. There appears to be a distinct paradigm in all the cases, revealing a corrupt system which is self-sustaining because some of the people expected to guard against the vice were also beneficiaries directly or indirectly.

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AUTHORS

First Author – Crispin Kukano, Ph.D. Candidate, University of South Africa; ckukano@cavendish.co.zm

Second Author – Chrine C. Hapompwe, Ph.D. Candidate, Binary University, Malaysia; chapompwe@cavendish.co.zm

Third Author – Jacqueline Siwale, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Zambia; jsiwale@cavendish.co.zm

Fourth Author – Brian Sianga Mukololo, MA; brian_sianga@yahoo.com

Correspondence Author – chapompwe@cavendish.co.zm / chrinehapompwe@yahoo.com