

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN THE WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN SIERRA LEONE

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Abstract: The eagerness of senior secondary school pupils in Sierra Leone for certificate to enter higher education institutions to pursue undergraduate degree or diploma/certificate in the face of public examination has been identified as one of the major causes of examination malpractice in Sierra Leone. This paper reviewed the forms of examination malpractice, incidences of senior secondary school candidates involved in examination malpractice in WASSCE and decision taken, identified penalties for the perpetrators involved in examination malpractice and recommendations for curbing examination malpractice in Sierra Leone.

The major forms of examination malpractice identified in Sierra Leone included: smuggling foreign materials into the examination hall; taking mobile phones into the examination hall; irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall collusion; impersonation; leakage; mass cheating; insult/assault on supervisors/invigilators, disorderliness, cheating, giraffing, conspiracy and aiding, forging of results and so on. Key players responsible for examination malpractice are: parents, principals, teachers, pupils, examination officers and government. The consequences of this act of examination malpractice is dangerous to the 6-3-3-4 system of education, the pupils and the nation at large. Penalties identified for examination malpractice focused at examination candidates, schools used as centres, principals, head teachers, teachers; supervisor, invigilator or examiners. Penalties identified for the perpetrators if found involved in examination malpractice are: for examination candidate, he/she would have his/her results cancelled; not be eligible for a subsidized resit of examination fees; would have his/her name displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list and would be prosecuted by Anti-Corruption Commission. For any school, if found involved would have the head of the school and deputy changed with immediate effect. For teachers, head-teachers and principal, if involved would be dismissed with immediate effect; have their names publicly displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list. For supervisor, invigilator or examiner he/she would be dismissed as a teacher with immediate effect if he/she is a teacher and have their names publicly displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list. Key recommendations were civic education for the public and the rules and regulations of examination malpractice displayed in every school.

Keywords: Forms, Causes, Consequences, Examination, Malpractice, Senior Secondary School

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right of all citizens of a nation and it is used for the development of human beings in the three domains (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor). It also involves a desirable approach in human behaviour through the process of teaching and learning. Armstrong, (1981). School is an educational institution that assembles people of different socio-cultural backgrounds for a common purpose. This purpose strongly promotes mutual co-existence among the different students. Learners who strongly identify with their school are thought to have a more positive attitude towards teachers, other learners and the entire educational enterprise (Armstrong, et al 1981). The main objective of school is to equip pupils with the required knowledge and skills to enable them contribute effectively to national development. It therefore demands periodic assessment and evaluation which are basically in the form of examinations and tests. This done in order to ascertain the level of knowledge and competence of students.

The 6-3-3-4 system of education in Sierra Leone is well-structured and comprises of different level of learners. These levels include: the preschool (ages 2 to 5 years); the primary school (ages 6 to 12 years) pupils start class 1 at age 6 and finish class 6 at age 12. It is a six-year programme. At the end of the 6 year, the pupils are assessed through a national examination, referred to the 'National Primary School Examination (NPSE)'. The purpose of this examination is to determine who could enter the junior secondary school and who could not. The third level is the Junior Secondary School (ages 12 to 15 years). At the end of the 3 year period, the pupils sit to the 'Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)'. It is designed to determine who could enter the senior secondary school. The next level is the Senior Secondary School (ages 15-18 years). At the end of the 3 year period of this level, the pupils take an international examination called the 'West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)' to determine who could enter either University or Polytechnic and who could not.

In Sierra Leone it is observed that at the end of each programme of the education system, pupils are assessed by an examination. The examination could either be national (NPSE and BECE) or international (WASSCE). This kind of examination is not only limited to Sierra Leoneans but other West African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia and Liberia. There are two modes of assessment of pupils in the educational system, these include: formative assessment and summative assessment. The former is a kind of assessment that takes place at any time during an instructional period to determine the weaknesses or shortcomings of pupils so that better plan of activity would be made for the future. In schools and colleges, weekly tests, terminal examinations are examples

of formative assessment. The latter is a kind of assessment that takes place at the end of an instructional programme. Three public examinations are conducted in Sierra Leone, these include: The NPSE, BECE and WASSCE. An examination is a form of evaluation where the learner is tested in all areas covered in the process of teaching at the end of a semester for proper placement and certification. It has a time table and a time frame. It always has an external body or examination committee to moderate. Moderation in an examination comes after the marking.

The examination body that conducts public examinations in Sierra Leone is the West Africa Examination Council. Examination plays significant role in determining what goes on in the classroom in terms of, 'what' and 'how'. Examination motivates learners to master things with greater importance. It serves the following purposes: gives feedback to the parent, teachers and pupils ; for diagnostic purposes; assesses the effectiveness of the teacher; finds out how the pupils are progressing; serves as stimulus or motivation; for placement purposes; compares and determines the categories of pupils in class; for guidance and counseling purposes; for research purposes and for certification

The examination papers administered by WAEC in the WASSCE comprises of two items. Namely: Essay Test items and Objective Test items. Essay Test- this item requires the pupil to compose in his own words the answers to a question. It is one of the tools used in our schools to measure pupils. It gives pupils the opportunity to express themselves in order to test their learning outcomes, how they integrate ideas into a logical and meaningful manner. It allows the learners to develop variety of skills of organizing materials in sequence during expressions. Essay item includes: restricted essay test item: in this type of item, the pupil is not allowed to write freely but is guided in the extent or length and scope of the essay. Guided composition essay in which the number of words is limited is an example of restricted essay and the free-response essay item: in this type of item, the pupil organizes and writes the essay depending on the scope and nature of the knowledge of exposition. Objective test item: these are test items designed to demand answers that are either wrong or right. The marks obtained from objective test do not depend on who is marking the test. All possibility of prejudice or human error is eliminated. The method of scoring of this type of test is objective. The following are the examples of objective test items: i). Multiple-choice test item; True or False test item; Matching Test item; Completion or short answer or fill in the blanks; Oral Examination- This kind of test item are given in order to test pupils' listening skills and how well they pronounce certain words that have similar sound but with different meanings and practical examination- this is intended to test pupils' manipulative skills with the materials they interact with. .

Statement of the Problem

Examination malpractice in Sierra Leone 6-3-3-4 system of education has been widely discussed and seen as a major challenge not only to authorities of WAEC but to heads of schools, the entire education system, the government and the society at large. The situation has become worrisome and if immediate intervention is not taken it will destroy the integrity of the nation It is against this backdrop that the researchers seeks to discuss examination malpractice among senior secondary school pupils in the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination in Sierra Leone

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to examine examination malpractice among senior secondary school pupils in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination in Sierra Leone with the following objectives: To discuss the examination malpractice as a phenomenon: discuss the forms of examination malpractice pupils are involved in; describe ways of eliminating examination malpractice.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice as defined by West Africa Examination Council (2003) as any abnormal behaviour or act exhibited via way of means of candidates or people charged with the obligation of engaging in exam in or outdoor the exam hall, before, during or after such exam with the intention of taking undue advantage. Examination malpractice is an unacceptable behaviour that has eaten deep and become cancer in the educational systems of Sierra Leone. It has become so prominent amongst pupils that it is destroying the nation gradually. Key stakeholders are aware of the damage it may cause if remedy is not taken to curb the act. Many times it has been justified by many students that it is a right to involve in examination malpractice in all public exams. Though examination serves as a bedrock for pupils' academic achievement, but its quality in Sierra Leone is diluted on the basis that there are so many factors affecting these examinations conducted by WAEC. The act affecting the quality of results obtained by pupils in public examination in Sierra Leone is Examination malpractice. Most of the pupils whose results are published by WAEC and have got university requirement for the past years and admitted in different programmes in the Higher Educational institutions in Sierra Leone could not measure up in their programmes of study. Most could not make the grade for promotion to another year and fall out of programme, while some are rusticated from their institutions due to examination irregularities. This situation has become very alarming to key stakeholders and there are argument among them of who is to blame in the society or who are responsible for examination malpractice? Whether it is the parents, teachers, and heads of schools, the society or government?

Examination malpractice has indicted every person of the society including parents, principals, teachers, pupils, examination officers, government, because they are equally involved in supporting and encouraging the cause of examination malpractices which is a great threat to the education system. Ijaiya (2004) asserted that so many people are involved in the act of examination malpractice, he confirmed that not only students are involved but parents, teachers, school heads and examination officers. Wilayat (2009) also defined examination malpractice as an intentional and planned unlawful activity to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage. He further said that malpractice has generally contributed to the overall demotion and deterioration of the standard of education. Maheshwari, (2011) defined examination malpractice as deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules. Ugwu (2012) also defined it as any deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules and designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage. For Hornby (2005), malpractice is a careless, wrong, or illegal and undesirable professional behaviour during and after examinations

Types/Forms of Examination Malpractice

Maheshwari (2011) stated that the distinct styles of malpractice are generally dedicated on the preconduct, conduct, and assessment stages. Ayanni & Anya (2017) diagnose styles of examination malpractices to consist of tattoo, token, contract, expo, computo, impersonation, query paper leakage, assisting of students via teachers, collusion among students, use of unauthorized substances within the corridors of the examination hall, giraffe or extending of neck to duplicate from others and spying during an examination. Maheshwari (2011) diagnosed leakage of public exam papers to spying, changing answer booklets, impersonation misconduct in the examination centre, attacking invigilators/examiners, making fake entries in candidates list/examination registers, and issuing fake certificates/degrees as styles of malpractice. Eze (2012) and Olanipekun (2013) diagnosed the following as major styles of examinations malpractice:-

Leakage: This is a situation whereby the content material of the exam or a part of it is disclosed previous to taking the exam.. Usually it involves one or more of the staff members of the centres. **Impersonation:** under this practice, a pupil is going to take a seat down for the actual candidate in order to by skip the examination for the alternative. Those individuals who arrange for such an act are paid before or after the exam as compensation of the service they rendered. **Taking of Foreign Materials in the Examination hall:** this incidence of examination malpractice is very common in public examination. It is a situation where candidates take materials like notes on papers, note books, phones etc that are smuggled in the examination hall through their pants especially the girls as if they are in their menstrual period. Some put these materials in their shoes, hems or hidden in a specific part of the examination hall before the start of the examination. **Copying:** copying could be an arrangement between candidates. Some clever candidates arrange after completing the exams allow a friend to copy from the answer booklet or candidate copy's from another candidate's work without his/her consent. **Collusion:** this a situation whereby a candidate exchange information to another by exchanging the notes smuggled in the examination hall. This normally happens when the hall is overcrowded and there is not much space between them in the hall and there is ineffective supervision. **Makers Malpractice:** this happens through the examination officer. This is done either by adding or reducing the original mark allotted to a candidate's script. Other forms of examination malpractice include: having prior knowledge of the examination questions before the examination and disseminating the questions or information to colleague and also exchanging the answered questions to colleagues in the examination hall. **Giraffing:** this term is derived from the morphology of the giraffe, particularly its long neck. This form of malpractice involves a situation in which an examinee cranes their neck to view what their colleague closer in seat to him/her has written and copies. This form of malpractice also takes place in overcrowded exam hall. **External assistance:** This act usually involves examination officers who receive bribes from candidates in exchange for some form of assistance before, during, or after the examinations **Inscription:** this involves inscribing notes on any part of the body like the leg, arm, palm and it is used for the examination.

Cases of Examination Malpractice Classified by WAEC Sierra Leone

Malpractice cases have been classified by WAEC's Council's rules and regulations for dealing with malpractice cases as follows:i) Bringing foreign materials into the examination hall ii) Taking mobile phones into the examination hall iii) Irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall iv) Collusion v) Impersonation vi) Leakage vii) Mass cheating viii) Insult/ Assault on Supervisors/ Invigilators ix) Miscellaneous/ new cases (WAEC, 2020)

Report by WAEC on Examination Malpractice Cases in WASSCE for School Candidates, 2020 in Sierra Leone

The West African Examination Council situated at Tower Hill, Freetown gave analytical report on incidences of examination malpractice for the 2020 WASSCE. According to the report, 151,741 candidates comprising 80,038 males and 71,703 females registered for the examination, The figure 151,515 representing 99.85% comprised of 151,399 from the four regions (Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Area) of Sierra Leone and 116 from Guinea that sat to the examination. From the total figure of 151,741, (2.82 %) indicating 4,270 of the candidates who sat to the examination were involved in various forms of examination irregularities. (WAEC, 2020)

Forms of Examination Malpractice in WASSCE for School Candidates, 2020 in Sierra Leone

As illustrated in Table 1, collusion was the highest (60.16%) form of malpractice recorded; irregular activities inside or outside the examination hall was the least (2.15%) form of malpractice recorded; no case of impersonation was recorded. See Table 1

Table 1

Recorded Report on Forms of Examination Malpractice in WASSCE 2020 in Sierra Leone

S/N	Type of Malpractice	No. of Incidence	Percentage of Candidates Involved as Reported Cases	Percentage Involved as of Total Sat Cases
1	Bringing Foreign Materials in the examination hall	527	12.34	0.35
2	Caught With Mobile Phones	1082	25.34	0.71
3	Irregular Activities inside or outside examination hall	92	2.15	0.06
4	Collusion	2,569	60.16	1.70
5	Impersonation	Nil	Nil	Nil
6	Mass Cheating	Nil	Nil	Nil
7	Total Number of Reported Cases	4270	99.99	2.82
8	Total Sat in the Country	151,515	2.82	

Source: WAEC, 2020 Report

WAEC's Decisions on the Cases of Examination Malpractice in the WASSCE 2020 for in Sierra Leone

The decisions on the cases of examination malpractice as indicated in Table 2. included i) cancellation of entire results, 1126 candidates are affected 2) Cancellation of subject result 3103 candidates are affected 3) Cases for further investigations 41 are affected

Table 2

Decisions on the Cases of Examination Malpractice in the WASSCE for School Candidates, 2020 in Sierra Leone

Decision	Number Involved
cancellation of entire results	1125
Cancellation of Subject result as appropriate	3103
Cases for further investigations	41

Source: WAEC, 2020 Report

Penalties of Examination Malpractices Irregularities by Key Stakeholders in Sierra Leone

The President of the Republic of Sierra Leone joined forces with key stakeholders to fight examination malpractice in the nation. To confirm this, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio established a Presidential Taskforce on examination malpractice which held extensive consultations with key partners between May and October 2019. These key stakeholders included: Officials of the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE), the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Sierra Leone Teachers' Union (SLTU), Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (CPSS), National Council of Head Teachers (NaCoHT), the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE), National Council for Civic Education and Development (NaCCED), other key MDAs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), UNICEF-Sierra Leone and Secondary school pupils. The consultative meeting was held at the Atlantic Hotel in Freetown, to develop and endorse the guiding document detailing the roles, actions and recommendations for key players involved with the conduct of the national and international examinations. The decisions taken by the stakeholders was specifically for the following: i) Examination candidate ii) The school iii) Teacher, head teacher and principal iv) Supervisor, invigilator or examiner i) Examination candidate: for the candidates the penalty is: any candidate confirmed to have involved in examination malpractice will: a). have his/her results cancelled b). would not be eligible for a subsidized resit of examination fees c) would have his/her name displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list d) would be prosecuted by Anti-Corruption Commission and/or Ministry of Justice as appropriate School: any school that is a centre confirmed to have involved in examination malpractice, after investigation by ACC and WAEC, would: a) have the head of the school and deputy changed with immediate effect b) be put on a publicly displayed probation list c) if the school is found guilty of the same offence twice within three years, would have its Board of Governors or School Management Committee changed immediately. The members that form either the board or SMC would not be eligible for serving in such a capacity for the MBSSE in the future. Teachers, head-teachers and principals: any teacher/head-teacher/principal confirmed to have involved in examination irregularity and/or malpractice would: a.) be dismissed with immediate effect b) have their names publicly displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list. Supervisor, invigilator or examiner: if found involved in any form of examination malpractice would: a) be dismissed as a teacher with immediate effect if he/she is a teacher c. have their names publicly displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list. Staff of agencies signatory to the communiqué: any of the staff that is a signatory to the communiqué and found involved in examination malpractice, such staff would : a). be dismissed as an employee (contractor or permanent) with immediate effect b. have their names publicly displayed on a comprehensive malpractice list (MBSSE, 2020)

Conclusion

Examination malpractice is in various forms. The following are forms of examinations malpractice: i) Smuggling foreign materials into the examination hall ii) Taking mobile phones into the examination hall iii) Irregular activities inside and outside the examination hall iv) Collusion v) Impersonation vi) Leakage vii) Mass cheating viii) Insult/ Assault on supervisors/ invigilators ix) Miscellaneous/ new cases. Sources also identified the following as major forms of examination malpractice: impersonation, disorderliness, cheating, giraffing, conspiracy and aiding, forging of results and so on. The key players as factors responsible for examination malpractice in the society are attributed to: parents, principals, teachers, pupils, examination officers, government, causes could be attributed to societal value system, the behaviour of candidates, parents and the education system. The consequences could be dangerous to both education system, the nation and the pupils. Penalties were also identified to perpetrators and ways of curbing the menace were also identified

Suggested ways or Recommendations of Curbing Examination Malpractice in Sierra Leone

As a means of curbing examination malpractice in Sierra Leone in public examination, the following resolutions are mechanism to eliminate examination malpractice: To embark on civic education to the public about the negative effect of exam malpractice on national development; revitalization of the Sierra Leone Examinations Committee; enforcement of penalties and disciplinary actions for all individuals found to have involved in examination irregularities or malpractice; committee of WAEC to annually reviews disciplinary measures/penalties and makes changes in accordance with the recommendations of the National Committee as well as those of other member countries; encouragement of peer-to-peer counselling and citizen engagement; every school should have an anti-malpractice champions/nominees; every school to have a display of the rules, regulations and penalties of examination malpractice on the school noticeboard. Examination officials should be well paid so that they would not be tempted to engage in examination malpractice. Disciplinary action should be immediately taken on perpetrators

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