

Why is Examination Malpractice on the Increase in Ghanaian Schools? A Case of Bimbilla Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

There are many studies on the forms, causes and effects of examination malpractice yet this illegal activity is still on the increase in Ghana. The objective of the study was to identify the factors causing increase in examination malpractice in Ghanaian schools. The study used a mixed method approach to gather and analyse data. The target population was all teachers and students of Bimbilla Senior High School in the Nanumba North Municipality of the Northern Region of Ghana. The accessible population was seventy-eight (78) - twelve (12) teachers and sixty-six (66) students of the same school. It was found that, leaking of examination questions by examination officials, over emphasis of certification over skills, weak security measures, bad government policies, and inappropriate pedagogy, poor remuneration of invigilators and ranking of schools were the contributing factors causing increase in examination malpractice. Based on the findings, it was therefore be concluded that, examination malpractice is seen as normal and will be very difficult to eliminate. It was therefore recommended based on the conclusion that, government and stakeholders in education should pay more emphasis on skills acquisition over certificates, improve the security measures of examination officials and improve the remuneration of invigilators.

Key Words: Examination, Malpractice, Health, Education, Productivity, Smuggling, Candidates, Security, Unqualified, Consequences.

INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice is a deliberate attempt to give students an undue advantage contrary to the rules of examination (Oko & Adie, 2016). Gyamfi (2022) grouped examination malpractice as giving and receiving information from others and using unacceptable materials to aid the chances of passing. This canker is on the rise in the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) especially in the Senior High Schools. This mostly occurs during the West African Secondary Schools Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Candidates always involve in different ways to get an undue advantage to pass the examination by all means. This canker occurs because teachers, parents, security personnel, and examination bodies who are stake holders to control it are rather relaxed in enforcing the rules (Gyamfi, 2022). The learners make their choices to the university to be trained for the job market after the S.H.S level and every student is doing everything possible to pass their examinations. According to WAEC (2024) examination malpractice has spread in the Ghana Education Service and threatens the integrity of education in Ghana. WAEC further stressed that, this bad act is no more a new thing but widely spread including cheating, impersonation and leakage of examination papers. Some candidates even hide money in their answer booklets to influence examiners. Between 2021 and 2023, over 10,000 candidates involved in examination malpractice in 2021 and rose to 44, 586 in 2023. The regions with most of these practices are Bono East, Ahafo, Ashanti, Central and Eastern (Emeli & Jamilatu, 2024). This bad practice will have so many consequences in the future generation including dishonesty in the job market, laziness among the working population, poor health delivery leading to

deaths, incompetent personnel and overall poor national development. Examination malpractice threatens and negatively affect professional performance. In 10 years from now, Ghana will not have competent personnel in all sectors of the economy including health and education. They are qualified as they have certificates but incompetent. There are many of these students moving into the health and education sectors which require honest people (Gyamfi, 2022). Most of the students believe they cannot do well in the tertiary and therefore plan to join the security services where they will not be examined academically as in other professions. If we continue to allow this as a nation, the security personnel will turn to arm robbers instead of protecting lives and property. There are many studies on examination malpractices, causes, effects and how to stop the menace. The objective of this study sought to identify the factors causing increase in examination malpractice in Ghana schools.

Research Question

1. What causes increase in examination malpractice in Ghana?
2. What are the forms of examination malpractices?
3. What are the effects of examination malpractices?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Different literature may be reviewed depending on purpose and objectives for the study (Abdullah, Mohammad & Abdusy, 2016). The study reviewed literature on the forms, causes and effects of examination malpractice to help gather ideas on why examination malpractice is on the increase. The literature was gotten from the internet and Journals which gave the study a wide view of ideas on examination malpractice.

Forms of Examination Malpractice

Gyamfi (2022) reported that, examination malpractice has become normal which is practiced in every educational level. The common malpractice is copying from peers, asking invigilators for support, invigilators teaching candidates, teachers smuggling prepared answers into examination halls, parents and school leaders struggling to get access to questions for students, security personnel watching these illegalities, students referring to hidden notes with the pretence that they are going to urinate. Oko & Adie (2016) noted the forms of examination malpractice as leakage, impersonation, copying and smuggling of foreign materials into exams halls. There are various forms of examination malpractices and the most common forms are copying, impersonation, leakages of questions, collusion and bringing unauthorized materials into examination halls (Rwezaura, Sarakikya, & Okendo, 2023).

Leakage is a form of examination malpractice where the whole or part of the paper is made available to candidates before the paper is written. This is usually done by some examination officials, printers, proof readers and messengers in exchange for money. Leakage of examination occurs when school administrators facilitate the content of the examinations to candidates in order to secure good grades or to raise the academic standards of the school. It can also occur when examination officials sell the questions to schools that are poised to be graded as best performing schools. These questions are therefore been circulated on social media platforms before the onset of the examination. Situma & Wasike (2020) found that examination leakage is having access to the questions before the exams. It is usually supported by individual's in charge of the examinations such as typists, printers, proof readers, messengers, paper setters and moderators. It can also involve hacking into computers that were used for typing the questions to get access to the questions.

Impersonation is a form of examination malpractice whereby an individual who does not register to write the examination enters the examination hall to write for actual candidates who believed they cannot pass themselves. It always involves tertiary students writing for students at the JHS or SHS levels for money. It is observed that, the person hired to write the examination disguise themselves to look exactly as the same person they are writing for. They sometimes collude with the examination staff to cover them. This form is not common because it is very risky and require determined people. Situma & Wasike (2020) noted that, impersonation occurs where a person who is not registered as a candidate takes the place of the registered candidate. It is usually done for money or to help friends or relatives with the help of examination supervisors.

Copying is the act of writing from another candidate's work with or without permission. This is the commonest form of examination malpractice where a candidate copies from another because he/she is unprepared or does not trust him/herself. Kabir (2015) recommends that, students who are found of copying in exams are very poor academically and also as a result of faulty school placement from the lower levels to the higher levels. Some students because of fear of failure copy anything they find directly from sources close to them. Students who trust themselves and try to offer support to their friends they know are weak academically by sharing their answers with them. Bibi & Umar (2020) noted that, the commonest form of examination malpractice is stretching of necks to copy from other candidates. Students always turn their necks around and try to write from whoever they found writing.

Smuggling of foreign materials is the introduction of unauthorized materials like parts or whole books, prepared answers from candidates or teachers into the examination hall. This is the common form of malpractice where students usually hide these materials in their under wears, shoes, and desks before the time of the examination. Angella & Daniel (2023) found that, candidates usually send or try to send unauthorized materials like textbooks, electronic devices and formula sheets. These materials are usually kept in pants, shoes, belts and bras into the examination hall and then bring such materials out as the examination progresses.

Causes of Examination Malpractice

Bolarinwa (2024) stated that, there are so many causes of examination malpractice including parental failure, Undue emphasis on certificates and Societal influence. Parents are supposed to make it known to their wards to be independent in all circumstances but some parents have never monitored the progress of their children's academic affairs. If parents are aware of their wards' academic progress, they will be in the best position to find remedies for poor performance. Early diagnoses of poor performance will help children to improve in their studies. When students become confident in their academic performance, the idea of getting involved in examination malpractice will not occur to them.

Fear can trigger students to get involve in any form of examination malpractice in order to make a good grade. This is usually as a result of lack of self-confidence which may lead students to take undue advantage in examinations. Hayat & Abubakar (2019) noted that, parents take a centre stage in the education of their wards. It is therefore expected of them to supervise the academic performance of their children and visit the schools from time to time to find out about the progress of their wards. Failure of parents to play supervisory roles could negatively affect the academic performance of their wards. Some parents only provide financial support and neglect the academic progress of their children.

There is undue emphasis on certificates which placed more valued than competence and skills. People may be highly competent and skilful but without a good certificate, they are cut off in the labour market. This has caused the rise in examination malpractice to enable them pass and be employed. Geoffrey & Daniel (2015) reported that, the high demands of certificates as a means of paper qualification for employment, appointment and promotion is a major factor causing examination malpractice. The first point of consideration for employment, appointment and promotion is academic grades with little consideration of skills.

The society take glory in examination malpractice and see nothing wrong with it. It is the society that teaches children its values and if it has now see nothing wrong with this illegal activity, the children will accept and practice it. Students have realized that, failure in examination should not be welcomed by anybody and this influences students to pass by all means. Suleman, Gul, Ambrin & Kamran (2015) reported in their study that, there are many causes of examination malpractice including students and parental threats to supervisory staff, parental pressure for securing high marks, poor implementation of examination rules, collusion of school authorities with examiners, school pressure for good results, inadequate preparation for examination, poor invigilation, disloyalty of examination bodies, poor payment of invigilators, poor teaching and learning processes among others.

Onyibe, Uma, & Ibina (2015) also observed that, since education is the source of human resource development of every nation, processes that lead to reduce its quality must be fought against. Dorsa, Senyametor, Arhin &

Kumedzo (2022) noted that, there was no statistically significant difference in students' views as malpractice been a means to acquire high marks to meet parents' expectations. Parents sometimes required unmerited results from their wards which cause examinations malpractice. Kyeremeh, Yaa, Ineke & Ata (2015) concluded that, examination malpractice will continue to increase since people affirmed their involvement in it and promised to do it again when given another opportunity. According to them, if they do not do it, others will still do it and get better grades for good schools at the higher level.

Effects of Examination Malpractice

Gyamfi (2022) noted that, examination malpractice has compromised the quality of Education in Ghana. Students who are assured to be assisted have been relaxed in their studies which defeat the entire focus of education. Examination malpractice can negatively affect the quality of both education and the society in the future. Hard working students are relaxed and rely on these illegalities since they believe they will be assisted to pass, (Oko & Adie, 2016). They further stressed that, such students will grow to be teachers or examination officers who will not see anything wrong with such practices. Students will be found with good results but incompetent or educated illiterates. Students who could pass examinations feel cheated when the low performing colleagues performed better than them through the fraud of examination malpractice. This illegal act can lead students into prostitution and armed robbery. According to Oko & Adie, 2016 "the products of examination malpractice will turn what is called square pegs in round holes. This results in lack of competence and skilled personnel to perform professional rules effectively. Such candidates may not be able to achieve their dreams because they did not acquire the required skills but passed their examination through illegal means".

Bolarinwa (2024) identified the effects of examination malpractice as, retrogression of national development because its educational products cannot think critically and analyse problems. These products of dishonesty will be the future leaders who are unqualified, ill equipped mentally and morally and cannot bring good initiatives for national development. There will be slow economic growth because the hard-working and honest students who may not involve in this illegality will not get the opportunity in leadership roles.

Kebuya & Mekongtso (2020) concluded in their study that examination malpractice produce corrupt and immoral leaders. These corrupt leaders will not see anything wrong when perpetuated by others because they are products of corruption. They stressed further that, if others can do well without involving in examination malpractice, all students can pass if they make the right choices. There must therefore be zero tolerance on examination malpractice. Ezeanya, Okoye, & Egbutu (2023) concluded that, examination malpractice has painted education negatively and its effects are slow economic and political growth and development. It also affects nations scientific, technological, socio-political development since the purpose of examination is defeated. Akinbi & Akinbi (2022) noted that, the effects of examination malpractice has reduced moral integrity and loss of self-confidence of the perpetrators. Leaders who were once involved in examination malpractice cannot speak against it because they were participants of the act in the past. Such leaders often have low self-confidence when it comes to innovation and critical thinking in problem solving. Examination malpractice leads to mistrust in examination results, cancellation of results, defeating the goal of education, affects national productivity, loss of confidence in employers and waste of time and resources since those who cheated and passed their examination at the lower level perform poorly at higher educational levels (Ampfo, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a step-by-step procedure for collecting and analysing data to reach conclusions and evaluate the goals of the study. This section presents a detailed description of the population, sampling, data collection instruments and procedure and data analysis. The study used a mixed method approach to gather and analyse data. The quantitative approach helped in the collection and analysis of numerical data while the qualitative approach is subjective to the observations of the study. The study employed convergent parallel design to gather and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. This helped the study explore the participants' views on the study.

Population and Sample

The target population was all teachers and students of Bimbilla Senior High School in the Nanumba North Municipality of the Northern Region of Ghana. The accessible population was seventy-eight (78); twelve (12) teachers and sixty-six (66) students of the same school. Convenient sampling was used to select the teachers while stratified sampling was used to select students from the form one(1), form two(2) and form three(3) classes. Convenient sampling was then used to select twenty-two (22) students from each form. Out of the 12 teachers, only 4 were females and 8 were males. Out of sixty-six (66), thirty-eight (38) were female and twenty-eight (28) were males.

Instruments and Data Collection Tools

The instrument for data collection were interviews, direct observations and Likert scale type questionnaire which were self-constructed. The instruments were checked for reliability with coefficient of 0.78. The instruments were further checked and modified to ensure they were reliable. The instruments were self-administered. The variables that were captured in the questionnaire were identified through interviews with the participants and also from literature review. They include, leakage of questions by exams officials, ranking of schools into best performing and poor performing schools, poor remuneration of invigilators, inappropriate pedagogy, over emphasis on certification over skills acquisition, bad government policies and and weak security measures. There were other factors but these dominated. The statistical tool for data analysis were frequency and percentages of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings as per the questionnaire are presented on tables and are supported with the interviews and observations.

Leaking of Exams Questions by Exams Officials

In Table 1, the responses of participants on whether leaking of exams questions by examination officials cause an increase in examination malpractice is presented.

Table 1: Leaking of Exams Questions by Exams Officials.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	23	30
Agreed	31	41
Strongly disagreed	17	22
Disagreed	5	7
Total	76	100

Source, field data.

Thirty percent (30%) of the participants strongly agreed and forty-one percent (41%) agreed that examination officials contribute greatly to the increased examination malpractice in Ghana. On the other hand, twenty-two percent (22%) of the participants strongly disagreed and seven percent (7%) disagreed that, leaking of exams questions by exams officials is a result of increased examination malpractice in Ghana. This shows that, about seventy-one percent (71%) of the participants believed examination officials are the main causes of increasing examination malpractice. A teacher stated that, some examination officials cause the leakage of questions to their family and friends. This is because, no ordinary person will get access to the questions if not through

insiders. The teachers added that, some examination officials sell the questions to schools and parents who are craving for good grades.

Ranking of schools

In Table 2 below, the responses of participants on whether ranking of schools cause an increase in examination malpractice is presented.

Table 2: Ranking of Schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	17	22
Agreed	30	40
Strongly disagreed	14	18
Disagreed	15	20
Total	76	100

Source: field data.

Twenty-two percent (22%) of the participants strongly agreed and forty percent (40%) agreed that ranking of schools is a result of increased examination malpractice in Ghana. Also, eighteen percent (18%) of the participants strongly disagreed and twenty percent (20%) disagreed that, schools’ ranking is a leading cause of examination malpractice in Ghana. This shows that, about sixty-two percent (62%) of the participants are of the view that, ranking of schools into best performing and low performing schools contribute to examination malpractice in Ghana. The ranking of schools is based on the grades of the students; and the pass rate of the school. School authorities, therefore, prioritize on ensuring that students get high grades and also increase the pass rate of the school. This pressure compels them to employ illegal means to achieve their goals. It was also observed that, these comparisons give unnecessary pressure to the low ranked schools to better their pass rate.

Poor remuneration of invigilators

In Table 3, the responses of participants about whether poor remuneration of invigilators is the cause of increase examination malpractice is presented.

Table 3: Poor Remuneration of Invigilators

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	35	46
Agreed	17	22
Strongly disagreed	19	25
Disagreed	5	7
Total	76	100

Source: field data.

Forty-six percent (46%) of the participants strongly agreed and twenty-two percent (22%) agreed that, poor remuneration of invigilators is the cause of increase examination malpractice in Ghana. However, twenty-five

percent (25%) of the participants disagreed strongly disagreed and seven percent (7%) disagreed that, poor remuneration of invigilators is the cause of increase examination malpractice in Ghana. This shows that, about sixty-eight percent (68%) of the participants are of the view that low remuneration of invigilator contributes to the increasing examination malpractice in Ghana. The teachers asserted that, the amount of money paid to invigilators per day is woefully inadequate. This compels many to connive with candidates in this illegal activity. Candidates contribute money in preparation towards examination which entice some invigilators to compromise the examination process. Some students also said that, teachers who help them to write their examinations are supposed to be helped.

Inappropriate Pedagogy

In Table 4, the responses of participants about whether inappropriate pedagogy cause increase in examination malpractice is presented.

Table 4: Inappropriate Pedagogy

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	28	37
Agreed	20	26
Strongly disagreed	21	28
Disagreed	7	9
Total	76	100

Source: field data.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the participants strongly agreed and twenty-six percent (26%) agreed that, inappropriate pedagogy causes increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. On the other hand, twenty-eight percent (28%) of the participants strongly disagreed and nine percent (9%) disagreed that, inappropriate pedagogy causes increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. This shows that, about sixty-three percent (63%) of the participants are of the view that, inappropriate pedagogy causes increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. The students stated that, they find it difficult to understand some concepts because of how the teachers handled such topics. A learner said that "Such teachers do not bring out steps for the students to follow but teach as if we are at the same level with them". A teacher agreed with the students that, a teacher cannot teach well if he/she does not prepare well. Such teachers do not employ the right methods to link the concept. These sometimes give students pressure to involve in examination malpractice because they did not understand some concepts.

Over Emphasis of Certification Over Skills Acquisition

In Table 5, the responses of participants about whether over emphasis of certification over skills acquisition cause increase in examination malpractice presented.

Table 5: Over Emphasis of Certification over Skills Acquisition

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	39	51
Agreed	23	30

Strongly disagreed	12	16
Disagreed	2	3
Total	76	100

Source: field data.

Fifty-one percent (51%) of the participants strongly agreed and thirty percent (30%) agreed that, over emphasis of certification over skills acquisition caused increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. However, sixteen percent (16%) of the participants strongly disagreed and three (3%) disagreed that, over emphasis of certification over skills acquisition caused increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. This indicates that, about eighty-one percent (81%) of the participants believed that, over emphasis of certification over skills acquisition cause increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. Some participants stated that, one needs a good certificate before he/she can even be short-listed for interview for further studies or a job. This compel most students to get involve in dubious ways to acquire a good certificate. It is also observed that, society now glorified certificates over values which is the reason why every parent and student wanted to do everything possible for better grades.

Bad Government Policies

In Table 6, the responses of participants about whether bad government policies cause increase in examination malpractice is presented.

Table 6: Bad Government Policies

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	17	22
Agreed	9	12
Strongly disagreed	43	57
Disagreed	7	9
Total	76	100

Source: field data.

twenty-two percent (22%) of the participants strongly agreed and twelve percent (12%) agreed that, bad government policies cause increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. On the other hand, fifty-seven percent (57%) of the participants strongly disagreed and nine percent (9%) disagreed that, bad government policies cause increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. This indicates that, about thirty-four percent (34%) of the participants were of the view that, bad government policies cause increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. Some teachers stated that, government policies have a direct impact in the teaching and learning processes but cheating in examinations is a choice by candidates. Some students condition their minds to cheat in examination because others have done it before.

Poor Security Measures

In Table 7, the responses of participants about whether poor security measures cause increase in examination malpractice is presented.

Table 7: Poor Security Measures

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	39	51
Agreed	23	30
Strongly disagreed	12	16
Disagreed	2	3
Total	76	100

Source: field data

Fifty-one percent (51%) of the participants strongly agreed and thirty percent (30%) agreed that, poor security measures cause increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. However, sixteen percent (16%) of the participants strongly disagreed and three percent (3%) agreed that, poor security measures cause an increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. This shows that, about eighty-one percent (81%) of the participants were of the view that, poor security measures cause increase in examination malpractice in Ghana. The teachers stated that, the questions always leak before the commencement of the examination which is caused by poor security measures. It was also observed that, students get questions through social media platforms before the examination start which are exactly the same. These are the reasons why students delay in going to the examination hall. Some schools open the questions early and take pictures which are circulated to other schools.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion, the various factors that contribute to the increase in exam malpractice in Ghana are tabulated in Table eight (8) according to their perceived percentage contribution by the respondents.

Table 8: Perceived Level of Contribution of Parameters to the Increase of Exams Malpractice in Ghana.

S/No	Parameter	Perceive Percentage Contribution (PPC/%)
1	Over Emphasis of Certification Over Skills Acquisition.	81%
2	Poor Security Measures.	81%
3	Leaking of Examination Questions by Exams Officials.	72%
4	Poor Remuneration of Invigilators.	68%
5	Inappropriate Pedagogy.	63%
6	Ranking of Schools.	62%
7	Bad Government Policies.	34%

Based on the findings, it can therefore be concluded that, examination malpractice is seen as normal and will be very difficult to eliminate. This is because, over emphasis of certification over skills acquisition, poor security measures, leaking of examination questions by examination officials are the main factors that causes examination malpractice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is, therefore, recommended based on the conclusions that, government and stakeholders in education should

1. pay more emphasis on skills acquisition over certificates by educating the public to know that, certificates without skills is useless.
2. improve the security measures of examination by providing examination monitors per centre and per process.
3. improve the remuneration of invigilators which will prevent them from taking money from candidates.
4. monitor teachers to ensure they use the right methods of teaching for learners to acquire the right skills.
5. ensure that, students are distributed evenly to schools irrespective of their grades to ensure the good students pull their low performing colleagues along.

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