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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract : This paper investigated academic integrity and examination issues in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. As a descriptive research, the study population comprised all the 281 secondary schools in the State. Out of this, a sample of 160 secondary schools was taken. Of the 4160 teachers in the sampled schools, 650 teachers were selected. The sampling procedure was by the multi-stage and stratified random techniques. The instrument used to collect data was an inventory while the data collected were analysed using percentages, t-test statistic and correlation analysis. The findings show that the rate of examination malpractices in Ondo State, Nigeria was high. The State took the 15th position out of the 36 States in the country in examination malpractice. This shows the lack of academic integrity on examination issues in the State. Significant differences were found in the level of examination malpractice between single-sex schools and mixed schools, boarding schools and day schools, urban schools and rural schools and public schools and private schools. Based on the findings, it was recommended that more efforts should be made by government to curb examination malpractices in the State. There could be the introduction of honour codes for schools such that schools that excel in the honour codes would be rewarded while schools that do not would be sanctioned. Examination bodies should introduce the American system of conducting examination that shifts from paper-based to computer-based examinations. This would enable a candidate to sit for examination on his own and know the result almost immediately.

INTRODUCTION

Examination in Nigerian schools dated back to the advent of formal education in the country and it was patterned after the British system. The term 'examination' could be described as a process of giving set questions to learners under controlled, standardized, organized and pre-planned conditions (Bandeke, 2005). Hence, the 1887 Ordinance made provision for public examinations in schools that have attained the requisite percentage of proficiency (Adeyemi, 2004). Since then, examination occupies a central place in the Nigerian educational system and it has been the sole criterion of quality (Adeyemi, 2005). In recognition of this, all secondary schools are expected to teach their subjects to meet the requirements of examinations bodies for the Senior Secondary School Certificate (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

This was in agreement with Onyike's (1981) contention that the West African School Certificate (WASC) examination which was an instrument for evaluating secondary school education programme in Nigeria was the sole determinant of what the teachers taught and what the students learnt within the school system. This remark was in agreement with Addison's (1990) argument that examinations are widely accepted as a means of assessment. Although the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations has replaced the West African School Certificate (WASC) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations in Nigeria, it still uses the GCE 'O' & 'A' level standards as its norms (Salami, 1992). Thus, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) perform the role of assessors of performance of secondary education in the country.

In Ondo State, Nigeria, examinations occupy a unique position as a measure of quality within the educational system. They are either internal or public. Internal examinations are the examinations that are set by teachers in the form of class tests and end of term examinations. Public examinations on the other hand, are examinations that are conducted in the public interest by recognized examining bodies that were not themselves involved in organizing instruction or preparing students for the examinations (Adeyemi, 1998).

The term 'academic integrity' poses some problems of definition. Some schools of thought have described it as the dignity which an individual exhibits in the pursuit of academic knowledge (McCabe, 2001). Others have described it as the prestige of oneself in his or her educational endeavours (Upper Canada College, 2004; Glasner, 2002). Hence, students' academic misconduct or malpractice includes a variety of students' behaviours like cheating during examinations, theft of the work of other students, bringing extraneous materials or prepared answers to the examination hall, fabrication of results and misrepresentation of identity or impersonation, unethical use of academic resources, tampering with the work of others and showing disregard of academic regulations (Gross, 2003; Owuamanam, 2005).

Researchers have reviewed many studies conducted on academic misbehaviour and found that estimates of students' cheating behaviours in examinations ranged from 3% to 98% (Central Connecticut State University, 2004). Thus, academic cheating seems to be harmful to the students who make the efforts to do their work honestly and with integrity. Cheating and all forms of academic dishonesty therefore appear to be serious violations that undermine the integrity of the learner. There is the tendency to have the results of all the students in the centre cancelled outright by the examining board thereby penalizing all students including the honest ones. Researchers have also argued that the incidence of academic misconduct in high schools has increased significantly in recent years (Cromwell, 2000; Olugbile, 2004; Uyo, 2004). Supporting this argument, Onyechere (2004) reported that the National Examination Malpractices Index for Nigeria increased from 10.5 in 2002 to 12.1 in 2003 indicating that of every 200 pupils who wrote WAEC in 2003, 12 were involved in examination scandal. This low index is a reflection of the state of degeneration, relegation of merit and the celebration of mediocrity in the country (Uyo, 2004). In the same vein, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) revealed that out of the 838,051 candidates who sat for the 2004 University Matriculation Examination in Nigeria, 58,121 would not get their results while an unspecified number of candidates from 17 centres had their results withheld for examination malpractice. Commenting on this, Olugbile (2004) argued that the examination fraud negates moral, ethical uprightness and academic integrity.

In another study on 4,500 high school students from 25 US high schools, Schulte, (2002) reported that 72% of the students admitted to seriously cheating on a written work while more than half had copied portions of a paper from the Internet without citing the source. Educational Communications (1998) based another survey of the top scholastic high school achievers and found that four out of every five students admitted to cheating during their high school career to improve grades. Another research by the Josephson (1998) involved 20,829 middle and high school students, where 70% reported that they had cheated in examinations.

In Nigeria, similar findings were made (Olugbile, 2004; Igwe, 2004, Bandele, 2005). Olugbile (2004), for instance, conducted a study on examination malpractice in Nigeria. His findings revealed that the level of examination malpractice in Nigerian schools is alarming. In the findings indicated in table 1, Ondo State took the 15th position among all the 36 States in Nigeria in examination malpractice. Since, the examination malpractice index (EMI) is the measure of the number of candidates involved in malpractice out of every 100 that sit for the examination at any point in time, thus, out of the 929,294 pupils who sat for the examination in Nigeria in year 2003, 111,969 of them were involved in examination fraud. In year 2002, out of the 909,888 pupils who participated in the examination, 95,519 of them were involved in examination malpractice (Olugbile, 2004). This indicates increase in the rate of academic dishonesty. On the state-by-state rating, Zamfara State with examination malpractice index of 47.87 or 2,291 students involve-

ment out of the 4,784 presented for the examination was adjudged the state with the highest examination fraud figure. It was closely followed by Abia State with examination malpractice index of 42.88 or 7,819 pupils involvement out of 18,233 presented for the same examination while Rivers State had 40.14 or 20,165 of the 50,232 pupils presented for the examination involved in examination malpractice.

Table 1: Examination Malpractices Rating in Ondo State Compared with Other States in Nigeria in Years 2002 and 2003

S/N	State	No Involved	No of Candidates Sat	Index (EMI)	Rating in 2002	Rating in 2003
1	Zamfara	2291	4784	47.89	36 th	1 st
2	Abia	7819	18233	42.88	8 ^h	2 nd
3.	River	20165	50232	40.14	5 ^t	3 rd
4.	Kogi	5016	28721	27.91	1 st	4 th
5.	Borno	2789	13131	21.24	35 th	5 th
6.	Kwara	5107	24380	20.95	2 nd	6 th
7.	Benue	6717	34182	19.65	9 th	7 th
8.	Cross River	4829	28105	18.28	11 th	8 th
9.	Imo	5421	33143	16.36	6 th	9 th
10.	Ebonyi	2232	13729	16.26	3 rd	10 th
11.	Kaduna	4314	28675	15.05	20 ^h	11 th
12	Enugu	4797	32314	14.85	7 th	12 th
13	Edo	5025	36322	13.84	24 ^h	13 th
14	Akwa Ibom	4890	36465	13.41	10 ^d	14 th
15	Ogun	6282	52807	11.90	16 th	15 th
16	Yobe	743	6320	11.76	33 rd	16 th
17	Kebbi	719	6543	10.99	21 st	17 th
18	Bayelsa	770	8211	9.38	4 th	18 th
19	Nassarawa	1423	16191	8.79	31 st	19 th
20	Bauchi	675	8246	8.19	22 nd	20 th
21	Ekiti	1477	18577	7.95	19 th	21 st
22	Kano	1142	15777	7.24	34 th	22 nd
23	Taraba	511	9778	5.23	26 th	23 rd
24	Ondo	1784	34531	5.17	15 th	24 th
25	Niger	707	14687	4.81	28 th	25 th
26	Jigawa	187	4095	4.57	13 th	26 th
27	Osun	1762	38658	4.56	12 th	27 th
28	Katsina	458	10134	4.52	30 th	28 th
29	Lagos	5857	141772	4.13	14 th	29 th
30	Sokoto	345	8507	4.06	17 th	30 th
31	Gombe	183	4682	3.91	37 th	31 st
32	Plateau	570	25314	2.25	27 th	32 nd
33	Delta	531	28105	1.89	18 th	33 rd
34	Oyo	963	54012	1.78	29 th	34 th
35	Anambra	335	19438	1.72	25 th	35 th
36	Adamawa	127	15375	0.82	23 rd	36 th
37	FCT	6	6603	0.09	32 nd	37 th
	Total	111,969	929,294	12.05		

Source: Olugbile, S. (2004) "Exam Malpractices rocks Zamfara" *Punch Education The Punch* 17 (19166) 40

Several reasons have been given for the increase in academic dishonesty in Nigerian schools. These reasons include the lack of enforcement of the Examination Malpractices Act No. 33 of 1999 for examination cheats, too much premium on academic certificates for employment purposes, relegation of merit, general moral decadence and laziness on the part of the students (The Comet, 2004). Likewise, Igwe (2004) argued that there could be no examination malpractice without the connivance of teachers, parents and students.

Honour codes, where students are expected to assume responsibility for their own actions and commit to integrity pledges have also helped to inculcate anti-cheating attitudes in students and they appeared to have reduced cheating among students. (McCabe & Klebe-Treviño, 2002; Lathrop & Foss, 2000). Supporting these findings, McCabe (2001) reported that the level of serious cheating on written work is 25% to 33% lower when students are stakeholders in the honour

code processes. Considering these viewpoints, this study would explore examination malpractices in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria in a bid to determining the causes, means of accomplishment and the effects of such practices and at the same time proffer possible solutions that would foster academic integrity in future examinations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The failure of the school system to address the problem of academic dishonesty such malpractices in examinations has been a major concern to educationists. Noting the fact that the Nigerian National Policy on Education places much premium on examinations as a means of assessment at every terminal point of the school system (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998), it seems that academic dishonesty has not been properly addressed in Ondo State, Nigeria. Common observations have shown that there is mass cheating in both internal and external examinations in the State. Nothing concrete has been done to reduce the problem except the cancellation of results for a particular centre or the withholding of results in certain subjects. The problem of this study was that of finding a lasting solution to the issue of academic dishonesty in public examinations among secondary school students in Ondo State, Nigeria. In addressing this problem, the following research questions and research hypotheses were raised:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the causes of examination malpractices in public examinations in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the devices usually employed in examination malpractices in secondary schools in the State?
3. What are the effects of examination malpractices in public examinations in the schools?
4. Is there any relationship between academic integrity and examination malpractices in Ondo State, Nigeria?
5. Is there any difference in the level of examination malpractices between single-sex secondary schools and mixed secondary schools in the State?
6. Is there any difference in the level of examination malpractices between boarding secondary schools and day secondary schools in the State?
7. Is there any difference in the level of examination malpractices between urban secondary schools and rural secondary schools in the State?
8. Is there any difference in the level of examination malpractices between public secondary schools and private secondary schools in the State?

METHOD

Research Design

This is a descriptive survey research. Oppenheim (1992) described a descriptive survey as a form of planned collection of data from a large population for the purpose of analysing the relationships between variables. According to him, a survey attempts to answer such questions as, what variables should be measured? what kind of sample would be drawn? who would be questioned and how often?

Study Population and Sample

On this note, the population for this study comprised all the 281 public and 200 private secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Out of this, a sample of 160 secondary schools was taken. This sample embraced 120 public schools and 40 private secondary schools and selected