Perceived Causes and Methods of Examination Malpractice in the Malawian Education System: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in South East Education Division (SEED)

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PERCEIVED CAUSES AND METHODS OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN THE MALAWIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH EAST EDUCATION DIVISION (SEED)

ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT SYMPOSIUM

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Statement of the Problem

NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS IN MALAWI

• Primary School Leaving Certificate of Examinations (PSLCE)
• Junior Certificate of Examinations (JCE)
• Malawi School Certificate of Examinations (MSCE)

• Every year, Malawi National Examinations Board deals with dishonest school authorities, teachers and parents

• 2002 – of 65,644 MSCE candidates, 5,254 were caught cheating

• 2003 – of 59,080 MSCE candidates; 2,345 were caught cheating

• 2007, all MSCE examinations were cancelled due to massive leakage of examination papers
1. What are the perceived causes of examination malpractice in public examinations in secondary schools in Malawi?

2. What methods of examination malpractice in secondary schools do Malawian students and teachers identify as the most serious?
Methodology & Research Design

- Used mixed methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data
- Used stratified random sampling to select the 10 schools out of 110 secondary schools (i.e. 5 urban schools and 5 rural schools)

Quantitative Data

- Used questionnaires to collect data
  - 24 Likert-type scale items for causes of cheating
  - 16 Likert-type scale items for methods of cheating
Methodology & Research Design

• 2 schools (1 from urban and 1 from rural) participated in focus groups

• Had 4 focus groups
  o 2 for students (urban and rural)
  o 2 for teachers (urban and rural)
  o Each student focus group had 6 members
  o Each teachers focus group had 5 members
  o Members were those who completed the questionnaires
Importance Performance Analysis

Technique used to understand customer satisfaction and service quality (Martilla and James, 1977)

IPA has also been used in education field
## Results/Findings

### Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>112 (56.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>88 (44.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher-student Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>59 (29.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>141 (70.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teachers</td>
<td>10 (46.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>49 (83.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/Urban</td>
<td>99 (49.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>101 (50.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class of Students (grade level)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 3</td>
<td>66 (46.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form 4</td>
<td>75 (53.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results/Findings

Causes of Cheating

- Lack of student discipline
- Insufficient preparation
- Pass exam at all costs
- Student pressured by parents/guardians
- Peer pressure
- Lack of positive self-concept
- Lack of good study habits
- Laziness to hard work
Results/Findings

Causes of Cheating

- Competition between schools
- Poor teachers' salaries
- Financial rewards to teachers for high performing students
- Insufficient teacher preparation for examinations
- Examination-oriented teaching
- Spoon feeding mentality
- Incompetent teachers
- Uncompleted syllabus
- Lack of effective supervision by invigilators
- Lack of appropriate punishment
Results/Findings

Causes of Cheating

- Inadequate learning facilities
- Remote examination centers
- Crowded examination halls
- Leakages of question papers
- Corruption by assisting others to cheat
- Sexual favors
Methods of Student Cheating

Results/Findings

- Serious but not frequent methods of cheating
- Most serious and most frequent methods of cheating
- Not frequent or as serious methods of cheating
- Frequent but not serious as other methods of cheating

- Bring Prepared Answers
- Copying other students work
- Copying from textbooks
- Hiring other people
- Writing in special centers
- Writing on body parts
- Use of cell phone/calculators
- Using hidden notebooks in restrooms
- Exchanging written answers
- Replacing old script with new
Results/Findings

Methods of Student Cheating

![Chart showing methods of student cheating with a legend identifying various cheating methods such as school authorities colluding with invigilators, invigilators conniving with students, teachers sending prepared answers, leaking examination papers by teachers and MANEB officials, invigilators giving students extra time, and intentionally wrongly sealed work.](chart.png)
Four major themes of the causes of examination malpractice emerged.

1. **Personal Factors**
   - Laziness by students
   - Poor study habits

2. **Social Factors**
   - Peer pressure

3. **Psychological Factors**
   - Unpleasant impact after failing examinations

4. **Environmental Factors**
   - Overcrowding of students in examination halls
   - Sexual favors
Three major themes about the **methods of cheating** emerged:

1. **Individual-cheating Methods**
   - Bringing of unauthorized materials to exam halls
   - Students writing on body parts

2. **Technology-assisted Cheating Methods**
   - Use of scientific calculators

3. **Collaborative-cheating Methods**
   - Impersonation
   - Using body parts (best used with multiple choice questions)
     - eye=A
     - nose=B
     - ear=C
     - chin=D
Educational Implications of the Study

- Although students are to blame, government is to blame for rampant corruption and teachers for negligence of duties
- Need to review the entire education system
- Use *Four-Frame Model* by Bolman and Deal
  - The four frames are:
    1. Structural Frame
    2. Human Resource Frame
    3. Political Frame
    4. Symbolic Frame (Bolman & Deal, 1977)
Educational Implications of the Study

GOVERNMENT
• must ensure adequate punishment irrespective of one’s status
• must demonstrate its firm commitment to fight and prevent corruption

TEACHERS
• must adequately cover the syllabus and prepare the students for examinations

STUDENTS
• must be responsible for their work
• must develop a growth mindset to see setbacks as a wake-up call to work extra hard
Conclusion

• Need to acknowledge student cheating as form of *corruption* rather than as *simple misbehavior*

• Instead of *mere regulation and punishment*, there is need for *continued education in ethical behavior*
Key References of Study


Thank You