

CORRELATES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OBIO/AKPOR AND EMOHUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Examination as an indispensable tool used to evaluate education programme is supposed to be sacred. Unfortunately, this sacredness has been battered by examination malpractice at various levels of education in Rivers State and Nigeria as a whole. The study correlated examination malpractice and academic performance of students at the Junior School level with particular preference to JSCE and SS1 students' promotional examination. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at the .05 level of significance. The instruments used for data collection was pro-formas which are archival data obtained from the schools under study. The population of 21,586 students was studied. A simple random sampling technique was used. The sample size of 800 students was selected using Taro Yamane's formula. The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r). The major findings of this study were that significance relationship existed between the two variables studied (academic performance in JSCE and SS1 promotional examinations of same students for a period of five years. Furthermore, the magnitude of the relationship per year of study has been average, low and/or very low, which signified a very weak relationship in general and a huge gap between the raw scores of individual students in Mathematics as a core subject. Based on the findings, it was concluded that examination malpractice is responsible for the weak relationship and the huge gaps identified that existed between students' Mathematics scores in JSCE and SS1 final results. Recommendations were that Government should lay more emphasis on practical knowledge and experience rather than paper qualifications for employment of labour and the re-introduction of moral instruction in schools, home and society as a whole.

Keywords: Examination, malpractice, academic, performance and correlates.

Introduction

Education in the general sense covers the whole life of an individual from cradle to grave. In Nigeria, before the 1840's there was in existence a system of education called informal apprenticeship system. This type of education as at that time was relevant to the need of the society and preference was for hard work. Teaching and learning were basically practical and students learned orally and through observation from their masters. No issuance of certificate to prove completion of the study since the society was interested in skill acquisition and practical demonstration of the art learned. There was no need for certification, since education was viewed as a means to an end and not an end itself (Akaranga&Ongong, 2013). The advent and influence of the Christian missionary activities affected a change from informal system of education to formal (western oriented) system. Therefore preference is no longer for hard work but for certification. Yet certificate is not a full proof of knowledge retention in this type of educational system.

Educational system as defined by Hornby, (2010) is a formalized transmission of knowledge and value, within a given society. To this end, educational system requires teachers, learners, contents and contexts in order to achieve set educational goals. Nigeria has established several educational systems and each of them had laid huge financial, material and labour costs on the country. It is pathetic that each of these very expensive programmes had supposedly failed leading to establishment of new ones. Even the most recent 9-3-4 system

has failed as observed by Abati (2010). Nigeria cannot continue to gamble with the future of her younger generations over various ineffective and inefficient educational systems. Researchers have pointed out that there is a performance of graduates from the educational system relative to what is obtained in the past. (Ugochukwu, 2009; Duzé, 2011; Aladejana, 2013).

The 9-3-4 system of education was introduced to replace the 6-3-3-4 system. The system merged the six years of primary education and the first three years of the junior secondary education also referred to as Universal Basic Education (UBE). Okolocha&Onyeneke (2013), analysed the 9-3-4 system to comprise of six years of primary school, categorized into lower basic (1-3) and middle basic (4-6), three years of junior secondary school (JSS1-3) now called upper basic (7-9) and three years of senior secondary school (SSS1-3), and lastly four years of tertiary education.

The worth and functionality of any educational system rely on its ability to actualize the set goals. The goals of educational system will be a mirage if examination ethics is not encouraged and instituted (Nwadiani, 2005). Therefore, in educational systems anywhere in the world, examination creates the difference and it still remains the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what the learners have achieved after a period of schooling. Hence any action that undermines examination poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of the examination result and certification.

Educationalists have adopted examination as one of the methods of determining students' level of cognition

with a view to ascertaining whether they have mastered what was taught or not. Odongo (2006) asserted that examinations serve as part of human culture readily available to assess the effects of teaching and learning, to distinguish and select talented people. Onuka and Durowoju (2011) affirmed that examination is most often used for promotion, award or certification. For accurate measurement of candidates' performances in any level of education particularly for the junior secondary certificate examination (JSCE) must be reliable and valid.

The JSCE results have continually fluctuated over the years across various states in Nigeria as observed by Clement & Emmanuel (2012). Also, Badmus (2007) observed that these variations in the academic performance could be attributed to several factors such as insufficient teaching materials, infrastructural facilities, quality teachers, in addition to political stability in the country. Even when these conventional factors do not vary, the JSCE results in some years are still terribly poor. Hence, the systems of education may also play a significant role in the academic performance of students in their JSCE. This is because the system of education is an expression of the philosophy and ideology of the administration of a country which invariably might influence budgetary allocation to education as well as the implementation of its policies.

Students are required to pass examinations such as promotion examinations, JSCE or other certificate and degree awarded tests after teaching and learning processes. These days, students seek for various means of

achieving success in examinations through cheating, impersonation, stealing of question papers, breach of duty, forgery, conspiracy, abetting, obstruction, external assistance, copying, smuggling of foreign materials, substitution of scripts etc. This means that when an examiner or examinee is aided contrarily to the rules and regulations guiding every facet of examination activities it is called 'examination malpractice'. Asuru, (2004) defined examination malpractice as an illegal act by the examinee or examiner or his/her agent/s before, during or after the examination with the intent to make the examinee have an undue advantage or earn an unmerited grade. Section 19 of Act 33, 1999 (Examination Malpractices Act 1999) defines examination malpractice as an act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secure any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes rules and regulations, to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued. The fact remains that examination malpractice has become a tradition practice in Nigeria education system at all levels. It is a form of deliberate cheating on examinations which provides one or more candidates with an unfair advantage or disadvantage. The prefix 'MAL' is derived from Latin abbreviation meaning bad. Therefore examination malpractice means bad practice applied in examination in order to make an examinee earn an unmerited grade.

The predominance of Examination Malpractice is a threat to the

reliability and validity of Examination in Nigeria educational system that jeopardizes the authenticity of certificate issued to the products of the school. It is a social malady and of great concern to those that have something to do with educational growth and development in all levels of education. The origin of Examination Malpractice can be traced back to 1914 when senior Cambridge local Examination leaked. In 1963, West African Examination Council (WAEC) detected the first examination leakage with First school leaving certificate and General Certificate Examination. The most prominent of Examination Malpractice was in 1977 when there was widespread leakage in school certificate Examination that gained wide publicity in Nigerian National dailies and coded as a "Malpractice Expo 77" since then Examination Malpractice has been on steady increase (Anzene, 2014). The involvement of people in examination malpractice could be attributed to a number of reasons of which self-efficacy is one.

Self-efficacy is the perception one holds to perform a task that include accomplishments, failures, successes, and verbal persuasion. Self-efficacy plays a major role in self-regulated behaviours and often affects students' functioning by influencing activities, efforts and persistence. Persons with high perceived self-efficacy as indicated by Santrock (2003) try to accomplish and persist longer at tasks than those with low self-efficacy. Those who have low self-efficacy are more likely to engage in examination malpractice and perform low in academics. They are likely to attribute their failings to external factors other than

themselves. They therefore perceive themselves as ineffective individual and so are prone to cheating in examination in order to measure up with those who have high self-efficacy. Bandura (2000) maintained that once false beliefs are established, they become self-perpetuating because those holding these false beliefs seek for individuals or groups who share the same false beliefs. Most students who cheat in exams also sat close to each other and have gradually internalized a false belief that cheating is a normal way of writing examination thereby engaging in the act without really knowing the implications and consequences within or outside school.

The school is a miniature of the society means that what exists in the society is equally obtainable in the school. In the researchers' view, the frequent occurrence of examination malpractice in the educational system stems from tolerance of dishonesty in the society. This is supported by Okoro (2001), that the permissive attitude of the school authorities and those involved in the supervision and invigilation of examinations aggravate the situation. The author went further to allege that some school principals and some proprietors of schools foster examination malpractice to maintain the prestige of their school(s). Suffice it to reiterate that the school is a microcosm of society and so what happens in the school is a reflection of what is happening in the society. The implication of the above views is that the school is simply reflecting what is going on in the society. The researchers in their view believe that examination malpractice in schools is the product of the society which nurtures cheating and turns

it into celebrities. It is important to recognize that examination malpractice has indeed penetrated all schools and at all levels including religious schools. Supporting this view, Godfrey (2002) opined that the incidence of cheating knows no boundaries, government, private or mission schools. It is, therefore, not out of place to say that the moral tone or climate of the school can encourage examination malpractice in schools' examination. In most cases, students that cheat might later perform better in higher schools, while those that were conscious without cheating later perform poor. There are therefore two of taught on the academic performance and examination malpractice. One could ask, if all those that engage in examination malpractice perform high? Based on this problem, the study sought to correlate examination malpractice and academic performance of junior secondary schools in Obio/Akpor and Emohua Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Despite the high premium placed on examinations by Nigerian educationists as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004), it seems that examination malpractices have not been properly addressed in Rivers State. The researchers' common observations have shown that there is mass cheating in public examinations in Rivers 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. In 2015, Mathematics paper in West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) examination leaked a day before the examination day and when the result of

that year was eventually released, virtually every candidate that sat for the examination in Emohua L.G.A made at least, a "B" (Godfrey, 2017). This is worrisome. If this trend remains unchecked, then, the resultant effect is the graduation of qualified students on papers and not in practice. Hence, the study was to investigate students' academic performance in junior schools certificate examination and Senior Secondary One (SS1) final examination to ascertain the degree of relationship between their academic performance and examination malpractice with particular reference to Obio/Akpor and Emohua Local Government areas of Rivers state, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to correlate examination malpractice and academic performance of students in Junior Secondary Schools in Obio/Akpor local government area and Emohua Local Government Area in Rivers State. Specifically the study sought to correlate:

1. the academic performance of students' Mathematics scores in Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) to same students' academic performance in same subject when in Senior Secondary One (SS1) final examination in Obio/Akpor Local Government area.
2. the academic performance of students' Mathematics scores in Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) to same students' academic performance in same subject when in Senior

Secondary One (SS1) final examination in Emohua Local Government area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does academic performance of students' Mathematics scores in Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) relate to same students' academic performance in same subject when in Senior Secondary One (SS1) final examination in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area?
2. To what extent does academic performance of students' Mathematics scores in Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) relate to same students' academic performance in same subject when in Senior Secondary One (SS1) final examination in Emohua Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

- Ho₁: the academic performance of students' Mathematics scores in Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) does not significantly relate to same students' academic performance in same subject when in Senior Secondary One (SS1) final examination in Obio/Akpor Local Government area.
- Ho₂: the academic performance of students' Mathematics scores in Junior School Certificate Examination (JSCE) does not

significantly relate to same students' academic performance in same subject when in Senior Secondary One (SS1) final examination in Emohua Local Government area.

Methodology

The study adopted ex-post facto design. Idoko(2011) stated that ex-post facto design studies research variables (data) which already existed before the commencement of the study and that the data are used as they occurred naturally. Furthermore, the study made use of the document showing the academic performance of the same students who took part in JSCE, continued and completed SSI in same school. Also consideration was given to the students' scores in Mathematics in view of the importance of other subjects like English-Language as emphasized in the National Policy on Education (NPE,2013) that students must pass in order to gain admission into senior secondary and higher education in Nigeria.

The population for the study was 21,586 made up of all the selected junior secondary school level three students (JSS3) in Obio/Akpor and Emohua LGAs in Rivers State that wrote their JSCE in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, which continued their senior secondary school career in same school. The source of this population size was gotten from the Exams and Records Department of the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (RSUBEB, 2016) and Vice Principal (academics) of the selected schools.

The sample for the study 800 made up 400 each from Obio/Akpor and Emohua schools. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample for the study and a simple random sampling

technique via balloting method was used to select ten JuniorSecondary Schools in each of the two Local Government Areas studied. In each of the selected schools, intact classes that sat for JSCE 2011 to 2018 were studied. The intact number of candidates that sat for JSCE in 2011, 2012,

2013, 2014 and 2015 was used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was result of JSCE and SSI annual examination result of 2011 to 2016. Data was analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correction coefficient.

Results

The result of the study was based on research questions answered and hypotheses tested and presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) Analysis of Students' Academic Performance in Junior School and Senior School in Mathematics in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

Year	N	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-value calculate	Direction of relationship	r-value critical	Decision
2011		725	385	66105	19067	35132	0.518684	+ve		Not rejected
2012		683	374	58591	17868	32033	0.31363	+ve		Not rejected
2013	8	698	416	61232	22710	36438	0.23754	+ve	0.707	Not rejected
2014		626	346	49180	15690	27127	0.139401	+ve		Not rejected
2015		639	314	51427	13694	25352	0.372652	+ve		Not rejected

N = Number of schools selected;

ΣX = Raw scores for JSCE; ΣY = Raw scores for SSI

Data in Table 1 showed the r-value calculated which indicated that the direction of relationship between the two variables, academic performance of students' JSCE and SSI final examination in Mathematics scores within the period of five years under study are all positive. The magnitudes of the coefficient are low except for 2011 which is average and 2014

which very low. In Table 1, the calculated r-value for each year is less than the critical r-value (that is $r(\text{cal}) < r(\text{critical})$) of 0.707, hence the null hypothesis is not rejected meaning that there is a relationship between students' academic performance in both examinations. It is worthy of note that the strength of the relationship is weak meaning that there is a huge gap that exists in individual candidates' scores in both examinations. The big question here is why the weak relationship or the huge gap?

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) Analysis of Students' Academic Performance in Junior School and Senior School in Mathematics in Emohua Local Government Area.

Year	N	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-value calculated	Direction of relationship	r-value critical	Decision
2011		664	407.9	55734	22015.65	34222.5	0.421442	+ve		Not rejected
2012		728	391	66646	20898.04	35740.2	0.188724	+ve		Not rejected
2013	8	683	423.7	59229	25052.89	36122.2	-0.03305	-ve	0.707	Not rejected
2014		675	430.5	57687	25752.5	37304.9	0.7233616	+ve		Rejected
2015		661	425.7	55297	26088.69	35470	0.193728	+ve		Not rejected

N = Number of schools selected;
 ΣX = Raw scores for JSCE; ΣY = Raw scores for SSI

Data in Table 2 showed the r-value calculated which indicated that the direction of relationship between the two variables, academic performance of students' JSCE and SSI final examination in Mathematics scores within the period of five years under study are all positive except for year 2013 which is negative. The magnitude of the coefficient for 2011 is average, 2012, 2013 and 2015 are very low.

From table 2, the calculated r-value for each year is less than the critical r-value {that is $r(\text{cal}) < r(\text{critical})$ } of 0.707, hence the null hypotheses for 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015 are not rejected meaning that there is a relationship between students' academic performance in both examinations. It is worth to note that the strength of the relationship is weak meaning that there is a huge gap that exists in individual candidates' scores in both examinations. However, for 2014 the r-value calculated is greater than the r-value critical ($0.7233616 > 0.707$) therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

This means that there is a strong and significant but not perfect relationship between the two variables. The big question still remains, why weak relationship for four out of five years under study?

Discussion of Findings

The results of the findings from research question 1 revealed that there exist a gap in academic performance of the students. From the sample scores, only 37.5% of those that scored 70 or above managed to reach the bottom of the credit level of 50 to 58; 12.5% managed to reach pass level and 50.0% failed. This is a clear indication of a problem that can be traceable to examination malpractice during the JSCE. The weak relationship due to the magnitude of the correlation coefficient being low for three years and average for two years is another strong signal that is a pointer to examination malpractices. These correspond to the interpretations of correlation coefficient of Ezeudu, & Uzoeshi, (2004) and Obodo, (2014) as indicated in table 1. From the analysis of the hypothesis 1, the decision rule applied shows that the

hypothesis is not rejected for each year under review, meaning there is a relationship between the candidates' scores in both examinations but reveals a very weak degree of the relationship. This also corresponds to the assertion of Uzoagulu, (2011) which stated that H_0 is not rejected if $r\text{-cal.} < r\text{-crit.}$

Similarly, the research question 2 shows obviously that 12.5% representing one candidate out of eight maintained grade A, while 25.5% credit; 23.5% pass and 37.5% failed in Mathematics. The strength of the relationship that exists between the variables is very weak which another strong pointer towards examination malpractices is. These correspond to the interpretations of correlation coefficient of Ezeudu, &Uzoeshi, (2004) and Obodo, (2014) as indicated in table 1. From the analysis of the hypothesis 2, the decision rule applied shows that the hypothesis is not rejected for each year under review except for 2014 which was rejected, meaning there is a relationship between the candidates' scores in both examinations but also reveals a very weak degree of the relationship. This also corresponds to the assertion of Uzoagulu, (2011) which stated that H_0 is not rejected if $r\text{-cal.} < r\text{-crit.}$ However for 2014 the hypothesis was rejected (i.e $r\text{-cal.} > r\text{-crit.}$ Meaning there exist a relationship but not a perfect one.

Conclusion

From the discussion of the findings of data analysed, one could imagine what really necessitated the existence of a very weak relationship and wide gaps identified in the academic performance of students who took part in JSCE and continued their educational career in same school and subject in SSI final examination.

With available statistics in this study, examination malpractice is seen as the canker worm in creating such gaps in the academic performance as viewed in the analysis carried out for this study. It then means that examination malpractice is real and still in operation in our School system. Though there could be other intervening and extraneous variables interfering with the academic performance of students such as illness, lack of qualified subject teachers, societal value of certificate and not hard work, poor attitude of students towards their studies, lack of commitment of some teachers, social and societal value, parents aiding and abetting their children in cheating, bandwagon effect/peer group influence and so on, which were not considered in the study but remain a menace in our educational system and avenue for other research works.

Recommendations

Based on the noticeable facts revealed in this work, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should lay more emphasis on practical knowledge and experience rather than paper qualifications for employment of labour. This will reduce drastically the menace of examination malpractice in our educational system and society because the practical knowledge and experience cannot be bought with money hence neither the students, parents, teachers nor examination body can utilize the avenue of money exchange in order to create undue advantage for a candidate over others.
2. Introduction of moral tone in schools should be encouraged as it will help students, teachers and parents to

understand the menace of examination malpractice. This will help to change their attitude towards examination malpractice and support the society to fight against it in the schools and society as a whole.

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Appendix-A

Guide on how to interpret index of correlation coefficient.

The table below illustrates the summarized degree of association in form of correlation of coefficient as propounded by Ezeudu & Uzoeshi, (2004) and Obodo, (2014)

Coefficient (r) Value	Direction of Relationship	Magnitude of coefficient
0.6 to 0.79	Positive or Negative	Very high/ Very Strong
0.4 to 0.59	Positive or Negative	High/Strong
0.2 to 0.39	Positive or Negative	Average / Medium / Moderate
0.0 to 0.19	Positive or Negative	Low
		Very low

Appendix-B

Percentage representing students' academic performance in SS 1 final examination results for five years.

Years / Score Range	Obio/Akpor Research Question 1	Emohua Research Question 2
2012:	%	%
70-100 (A)	0.0	12.5
50- 69 (C)	12.5	50.0
40-49 (P)	62.5	25.0
0 39 (F)	25.0	12.5
2013:	%	%
70-100 (A)	0.0	12.5
50- 69 (C)	37.5	25.0
40-49 (P)	37.5	25.0
0- 39 (F)	25.0	37.5
2014:	%	%
70-100 (A)	0.0	12.5
50- 69 (C)	75.0	25.0
40-49 (P)	25.0	50.0
0 39 (F)	0.0	12.5
2015:	%	%
70-100 (A)	12.5	12.5
50- 69 (C)	75.0	62.5
40-49 (P)	12.5	12.5
0- 39 (F)	0.0	12.5
2016:	%	%
70-100 (A)	0.0	25.0
50- 69 (C)	37.5	25.0
40-49 (P)	37.5	25.0
0- 39 (F)	25.0	25.0