

## The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education

An official journal of the Department of Teacher Education, University of Zimbabwe

**Editor: Dr B. Chenjerai Chisaka**  
 Department of Teacher Education  
 University of Zimbabwe  
 P O Box MP167  
 Mount Pleasant  
 Harare  
 Email: bcchisaka@yahoo.co.uk

### Editorial Board:

Dr I. Jeso  
 Mr. P. Kangai  
 Mr. O. Mavundutse  
 Mr. S. Matiure

### DTE Advisory Board

Dr O. Shumba  
 Prof. B.R.S Chivore  
 Mr Q. Bhila  
 Mr. C. Munetsi  
 Mrs C. Muvirimi  
 Mrs B. Vidovic

### Editorial Board Secretary:

Ms R.T Mareya

The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education [ISSN: 1022-3800] is a journal that is published two times, one volume of two issues per year by the Department of Teacher Education, University of Zimbabwe.

### Subscription Rates

The subscription rates per year and per volume (2issues) of the journal are as follows. These rates are subject to change without prior notice.

	Within Zimbabwe	Outside Zimbabwe
Individual	Z\$7 000.00	US\$ 80.00
Institutions	Z\$8 000.00	US\$150.00

Single copies may be ordered for Z\$3000.00 within Zimbabwe and for US\$50.00 outside Zimbabwe.

**The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education**

**ISSN: 1022 – 3800: Volume13, Issue1, July 2004**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGES</b>
❖ Editorial	i - v
❖ Book Evaluation: Improving Teacher Preparation R. Chireshe	1 - 3
❖ Stress Antecedents Among Student Teachers. O. Mavunditse	4 - 20
❖ Students' Perceptions of Factors and Gender Differences that Influence their achievement in "O" Level Mathematics in Mashonaland Central Region. L. Nyaumwe, R. Bappoo, G. Buzuzi, and O. Kasiyandima	21 - 39
❖ The Role of Theory in the Sociological Study of Education. R. Nyoni	40 - 51
❖ Examination Malpractices in Schools: Views from Secondary School Students in the Harare Region: Zimbabwe. A.T Sigauke	52 - 72

# **EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN SCHOOLS: VIEWS FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE HARARE REGION: ZIMBABWE**

**Aaron T. Sigauke**

## **Abstract**

Cheating in examinations in Zimbabwe's education system has lately been widely reported in the media. This is a problem that is a disgrace not only for the culprit but also a reflection of similar levels of immorality in the wider society. This study set to find out from students, who themselves are part of the problem, their views on the nature of, the extent of and motives for malpractice in their schoolwork.

The study, which used a qualitative design, collected views from 460 students sampled from a population of 3 540 students from five high schools in Harare. Questionnaires consisting of both closed and open-ended questions were used to collect data. Information from the analysed data revealed that students are involved in cheating not only in examinations but also in their everyday class work. To some extent teachers and other interested groups were implicated in this problem. Cheating is done for a variety of reasons and takes different forms. The many suggested solutions provided by the students themselves in this study should be treated as useful guidelines to some serious approaches in trying to deal with the problem if it is to be controlled.

## **1.0 Introduction and Background to the Study**

Examination malpractice in Zimbabwe's educational institutions, especially in high schools and tertiary colleges, has become a problem in recent years. Almost every year the media carries reports about the different types of examination mal-practices that occur in schools and colleges. The following excerpts from the mass media confirm this.

"Preventing Exam Leaks" (Mpfu, Zimbabwe Herald, Friday 16/ 11/2001 p8).

This is the title to a cartoon showing the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZimSec) staff writing examinations for candidates while at the same time instructing the public by a large poster to be silent:

"Silence Exams in Progress".

"Exam Markers getting a raw deal from ZimSec". (Sunday Mail, Sunday 10/11/2001 p9).

This was the title to a letter that complained about the bad conditions under which markers marked examination scripts. The letter claimed that while markers were working under these bad conditions ZimSec and its officials were making huge profits from examination fees paid by candidates.

"ZimSec should act now to curb exam leaks" (Chifamba, Zimbabwe Herald, Monday 19/11/2001, pp9).

The writer complained that since the mid 1990s examination leaks have become persistent yet ZimSec refuses to discuss the issue openly. The writer provides details of years, schools and examination papers that were involved as evidence to his claims. He points out that examination leaks lead to a loss of the credibility of the system. He suggests the need for harsh punishment of the offenders.

"Exam scam lends youth in prison" (Zimbabwe Herald, Monday 17/12/2001 pp3).

This is a report about a youth who paid a friend \$200 for him to sit for his examination using his identity card. The impostor ended up in prison.

"Man charged over exam leaks" (Zimbabwe Herald, Wednesday 10/4/2002 p3).

The article of the above title reports about a man who was working for a government owned printing company who leaked an examination paper to a female student for sexual favours.

"Exam cheating rife at campus" (Mutema, Varsity Times, 2001 p3).

In the article of the above title the writer gives a detailed report of the various ways on and reasons for examination cheating at one university in Zimbabwe.

These and many other unreported cases are clear indications of a big problem that has entered the country's education system and which needs thorough investigation. The problem is of great concern not only for the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture but also to parents, students, teachers and other stakeholders outside the education system. As Salami (1990) observes, this worry arises from the fact that an examination loses its validity, reliability and usefulness once the questions get into unauthorised hands at any stage before it is administered to those who are to be tested. This view is supported by Isemede, Okwe and Fabyan (1990) who say if results of an examination portray candidates who do not know as though they know then such an examination would not have achieved the purpose for which it had been designed. Following these many media revelations the Government of Zimbabwe consequently set up a Parliamentary Committee on Education part of whose mandate was to look into the problem of cheating in examinations in schools (Zimbabwe Herald, Friday 17/01/2003 p6).

Malpractice in examinations is a problem not only for Zimbabwe but also for many countries the world over. For instance, in Nigeria Babalege (1997) reports that when sitting for government examinations cheating is 'the thing to do'. The West African Examination Council (W.A.E.C.) jointly owned by education authorities in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia sets school examinations. It has had to cancel many examination papers in the past because of examination malpractice. Weak students hire brighter ones to sit examinations for them at an agreed fee.

The situation is more serious for university entrance examinations where, for example, in 1997 46% of the 376000 who sat the Joint University Admission and Matriculation Examinations were disqualified due to examination malpractice (Babalege, 1997).

## 2.0 Literature Review

Different opinions have been expressed about what examinations are, their different types and purposes, what malpractice in examinations involves, who is involved and for what purposes.

Cleveland (1988) defines an examination as the assessment of a person's performance when confronted with a series of questions, problems or tasks set for him in order to ascertain the amount of knowledge that he has acquired. It also tests the extent to which the person is able to utilise it or the quality and effectiveness of the skills he has developed. Barnhant and Barnhant (1980) identify examinations as simply a list of questions administered to a candidate or a group of candidates to test on how much they know on an issue.

Examinations conducted in schools are either of an internal or external type. Internal examinations are set within the institutions of learning and administered to candidates in order to give teachers feedback on student ability. They also enable teachers to make decisions on the position of the students in their subjects and to know students' strengths and weaknesses in their particular disciplines. External examinations, on the other hand, are set outside the educational institutions, for instance, examinations set by the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), Cambridge Schools examinations and the West African Examinations Council (W.A.E.C.). These are conducted usually to determine which students will go further in education and which will take to another calling. Examinations may either be written, oral, practical or a combination of these. Both internal and external examinations are common in Zimbabwe. Dore (1976) observes that educational qualifications, usually determined by performance in examinations, have led to what he calls the scourge of the certificate. With a certificate one has a passport for employment and entrance to higher levels of education. However, as Bray, Clarke and Stephens (1986) note, through international examinations which purport to provide international standards, education systems in the third world have

become irrelevant to the needs of their countries. This is why Oxenham (1984) is of the view that examination qualifications are nothing more than just a strategy for the selection of individuals for occupations. They are licences that tell very little about the knowledge and skills of an individual. They do not guarantee that the licence holders can practically demonstrate their skills and knowledge. As competition for the labour market intensifies the demand for better examination results for this selection process also increases. This has led to what Dore (1976) has called the 'examination hell' among Japanese students. At the University of Zimbabwe the examination venue, called the Great Hall, is nicknamed the 'Great Hell' because of the examination anxiety experienced by candidates just before writing examinations. Examinations have also negatively affected the teaching-learning strategies among students and teachers, the subject content and educational objectives.

They have killed the intrinsic motivation and encouraged extrinsic motivation (Lewin, 1993). Examinations have led to a host of immoralities such as examination malpractice.

A malpractice is a dereliction from professional duty, whether unintentionally, criminally or merely negligence that results in injury, loss or damage to the recipient by one rendering professional services (Barnhart and Barnhart, 1980). In the area of examinations, malpractice is not restricted to certain levels of education but rather it covers all levels from primary school level to the tertiary institutions. Examination malpractice can broadly be grouped into malpractice by the candidate, the teacher, school authorities and by external interests such as examination councils, parents and others. Examination malpractice by candidates may include copying from notes and textbooks, copying from other candidates or sitting for and doing examinations for friends (Babalege, 1997). On the part of teachers malpractice may involve working out solutions for candidates specially in subjects that require calculations of answers, helping students to get notes or scripts from one student to another or from outside into the examination room. They may also inflate marks that students get or help students to smuggle out live questions for examinations that are expected to be done some days to come. Teachers may also help students to prepare solutions in answer scripts in advance and submitting these during or after the examination.

Examination malpractice by some external interests may involve custodians of question papers such as examination officers and bank officials. They may also smuggle out live question papers before the examination day. Officials may also influence marks by altering the originally awarded marks or may change the originally submitted scripts while new ones are put in their place.

Candidate involvement in examination malpractice may be due to factors that include laziness to read and yet being desperate to pass examinations by all means. They also realise that examination times are occasions that one should use to secure future positions. Teachers and custodians of examination papers do so for a variety of reasons, some of which may be to enrich them or to satisfy their sexual desires if this is done for someone of the opposite sex.

### **3.0 The Study**

The purpose of this study was to collect student views on the nature of examination malpractice and the extent to which these are taking place in high schools. It also aimed at establishing, from the students' perspective, the motives behind examination malpractice and the control measures that can be put in place as a way of discouraging examination malpractice at the school level.

### **4.0 Methodology (Design)**

This study used a case study design. Data were collected from 460 high school students randomly sampled from a total of 3540 students within five high schools in Harare.

This is approximately 13% of the student population involved in the study. Assistance on the selection process was obtained from both the administration and class teachers of the schools. Questionnaires consisting of both closed and open questions were distributed to the sampled students. There was a 100% return rate.

The analysis of data uses a series of tables bearing raw figures and their equivalent percentages. The research also includes verbatim statements from students.

## **5.0 Data analysis and discussions**

Bailey (1982) points out that the sample size available for data analysis may vary from question to question because some respondents in the sample may fail to answer certain questions. This may be the case when respondents answer questions in a hurry, or when they want to avoid questions that invade their privacy, difficult questions or questions which are inapplicable to them. If non-respondents are received the researcher is advised to devise a standard code to punch them so that they are identified. Two approaches are suggested in this regard. Firstly, non-respondents can be handled either by subtracting them from the total sample and then use is made of the new smaller figure as the base for percentages, that is, after eliminating the non-responses completely from the analysis. Alternatively, the non-respondents may be included in the total sample size. Thus the base of analysis remains constant from question to question. This study used this second approach in the analysis of data in which a number of non-respondents were recorded for the different questions. However, in comparing the statistics focus is on the figures representing those members of the sample who actually responded to the questions since this gives a clearer picture of the magnitude of differences in views on the variables investigated.

The first question asked respondents to indicate from a given list of suggested student written areas where cheating was most common. They were also to rank order these starting with one in which they thought cheating was most common ranking as number one (1) and the least common ranking as number five (5). Table 1 shows the distribution of their views on this.

Table 1: Areas in which cheating is most common and least common

Area	1. most common	2.	3.	4.	5. least common	No response	Total
Ext. Exams	27 (5.9%)	12 (2.6%)	22 (4.8%)	18 (3.9%)	<b>126</b> (27.4%)	255 (55.4%)	<b>460</b> (100%)
Daily exercises	<b>199</b> (43%)	27 (5.9%)	9 (2%)	13 (2.8%)	32 (7%)	180 (39%)	<b>460</b> (100%)
Revision Tests	51 (11.1%)	<b>163</b> (35%)	30 (6.5%)	12 (2.6%)	26 (5.7%)	178 (38.7)	<b>460</b> (100%)
Mid-yr. Exams	17 (3.7%)	22 (4.8%)	<b>140</b> (30.4%)	56 (12.2%)	33 (7.2%)	192 (41.7%)	<b>460</b> (100%)
Yr. End exams	16 (3.5%)	18 (3.9%)	35 (7.6%)	<b>132</b> (28.7%)	53 (11.5%)	206 (44.8%)	<b>460</b> (100%)
No responses	150 (32.5%)	218 (47.4%)	224 (48.7%)	229 (49.8%)	190 (41.2%)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b> (100%)	<b>460</b> (100%)	<b>460</b> (100%)	<b>460</b> (100%)	<b>460</b> (100%)		

Among areas ranked as number (1) the written exercises is at the top of the list with 43% choosing this as the most common followed by revision tests (35%), mid year examinations (30.4%) and end of year examinations (28.7%). For those areas ranked at number five (5), least common, external examinations are at the top with 27.4% respondents. If, as these statistics show, cheating occurs in daily written exercises it may not be surprising that this is carried over into the final examinations since cheating would have been nurtured on a daily basis.

Table 2 shows methods by which students cheat. From the total students sampled 34.8% said copying from friends is very common while 37.2% thought that the last thing one can do is to sit examinations for a friend.

**Table 2: The most and least common forms of cheating**

<b>Form of Cheating</b>	<b>1. most common</b>	<b>2.</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>5. least common</b>	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Total</b>
Copying-note bk.	88 (19.1%)	105 (22.8%)	39 (8.5%)	24 (5.2%)	26 (5.7%)	178 (38.7%)	460 (100%)
Copying-txt bk.	37 (8%)	36 (7.8%)	136 (29.6%)	36 (7.8%)	36 (7.8%)	179 (39%)	460 (100%)
Copying-friend	160 (34.8%)	56 (12.2%)	32 (7.0%)	15 (3.3%)	22 (4.8%)	175 (37.9%)	460 (100%)
Getting papers in advance	38 (8.3%)	17 (3.7%)	24 (5.2%)	101 (22.0%)	100 (21.7%)	180 (39.1%)	460 (100%)
Sitting exam for friend	21 (4.6%)	17 (3.7%)	14 (3.0%)	56 (12.2%)	171 (37.2%)	181 (39.3%)	460 (100%)
No responses	116 (25.2%)	229 (49.8%)	215 (46.7%)	228 (49.5%)	105 (22.8%)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>460 (100%)</b>	<b>460 (100%)</b>	<b>460 (100%)</b>	<b>460 (100%)</b>	<b>460 (100%)</b>		

Friends play a major role when cheating in examinations as was confirmed by one respondent who said:

“I copied from a good friend of mine”.

Students use sign language like tapping shoes on the floor, tapping a pen on the desk, coughing and sneezing so that a friend would benefit. Others would whisper to friends in the absence of the teacher or would raise and read an answer or question paper so that a friend sitting behind would see.

Other various ways by which students cheat include writing answers on various parts of their bodies for instance hands, thighs and legs. They also wrote on various items that they bring into the examination rooms things like tissue paper, paper hidden in ball point pen barrels, pencil cases, rulers and calculators. Uniforms such as ties, shirts and pockets of their blazers are also useful areas where possible answers to questions are written before the examination. Students also fake illness in order to go and read answers outside or would go to the toilet to read answers and coming back into the examination room. Others said students cheated by writing answers on desks, bribing teachers and examination supervisors and by stealing examination papers from the staff room.

Table 3 below shows student responses on their involvement in cheating.

Table 3: Student involvement in cheating.

Question	Yes	No	No response	Total
Have you ever cheated?	181 (39.3%)	111 (24.2%)	168 (36.5%)	460 (100%)
Were you caught?	58 (12.6%)	188 (40.9%)	214 (46.5%)	460 (100%)
Do you regret for cheating?	165 (35.9%)	82 (17.8%)	213 (46.3%)	460 (100%)

Slightly more than thirty-nine percent (39.3%) admitted to have cheated at their schools at one time or another. In addition to the various strategies listed on Table 2 above students also cheated by exchanging notes, answer sheets and textbooks. One said he would write notes faintly on the chalkboard then sit in front during examination writing. In daily written work wrong marks would be called out when the teacher is recording marks, or they would write the answers while at home and handing these in with the others.

“Why did you cheat?”

A variety of reasons were provided which included the following

“Guess what I got after cheating, an ‘A’ in Shona, I felt great”.

“I just wanted to feel great when people in my class cheer me up”

“To pass with flying colours so that my parents would praise me”.

"To please my teacher".

"The teacher would beat me up if I failed".

"My father would beat me up if I failed".

Other reasons were that they wanted to maintain their standards; to get a better mark than the previous one; because the examination was too difficult; because of pressure from home or because there was too much work to do. Some admitted that they had not read enough since they had not been given enough time and therefore were scared of failing.

"I was the best in the subject so I could not allow another person to surpass me".

"Others were doing it so why not me".

"The teacher ambushed us so I could only pass by cheating".

"I wanted to be as good as my friends in Maths".

"The exam paper came my way by accident".

"I could not remember all the formulas by heart".

"To go through "O" and "A" Levels and to have a good living afterwards".

In some cases it was because teachers demanded books before the students had finished or because students wanted to get into top streams. Where notes were too many to be revised and in some cases where the teacher had not taught the topic at all students ended up cheating.

"I knew everything except very little so I had to cheat, it wasn't much" one respondent said.

"I couldn't be seen as a failure among my friends" said another.

Those who admitted to cheating (40.9%) said they were not caught while only 12,6% said they were caught cheating (Table 4).

"How were you punished or would be punished if you were to be caught?"

Offenders were punished in various ways such as being disqualified; given a zero; beaten up; sent for manual labour; getting marks deducted; simply being warned or being asked to bring parents.

In some cases offenders were made to write a different test; got sent out of the examination room; embarrassed in front of the whole school; work was not marked and in others getting the answer sheet torn there and then.

"I was asked to sweep all the class rooms at my school" said one student.

"We were changed sitting positions" said another.

"Those who cheat must be suspended or even expelled from school" suggested another student.

On whether they regretted or would ever regret for cheating 35,9% admitted that they regretted while 17,8% said they did not (Table 3). Some sentiments went like:

"Cheating is bad, actually I failed the test in the end".

"It does not help, I fooled myself because the certificate does not reflect my ability".

"It's a disgrace, it is very embarrassing when you get caught".

"I feel that God will punish you when you cheat".

For copying wrong answers one respondent said God had in fact given him an instant punishment.

"It's morally wrong and self cheating, I still have this feeling".

"Those who don't cheat are really happy for their marks, as for me there is no satisfaction in it. It is a sign of laziness".

"You regret it for the rest of your life".

"The bible says respect authority, don't cheat. I feel I am a hero for nothing. I do not deserve it".

"I feel I was lying to my parents".

For cheating one student got suspended and as a result each time he tried to cheat again he got scared. For others cheating had become a habit. Cheating may, in fact, negatively affect the future lives of students because it is criminal to cheat. Besides, they added, cheating would disappoint their teachers and parents.

"It is bad for my reputation".

"Everyone had failed, why should I be the only one to pass through cheating? I regret it".

Those who said they did not regret for cheating (17,8%) defended themselves with sentiments like:

"I passed my exams with a better grade".

"I am now doing my "A" Level. I would have been loitering in the streets, cheating is the way forward."

"No one wants to fail exams, I passed that 's all what I wanted".

"My parents were jubilant that I had improved".

"It's nothing to be ashamed of, you get a chance to redeem yourself later."

"I earned more marks".

"It was just a minor revision test".

"We were young and the young ones always do it".

"What else could I do, work was needed urgently".

"I learn more from copying correct answers rather than work alone on what I don' t know".

"I am now doing sciences at "A" Level which is what I wanted to do".

Others said they had always got away with it, that they had no guilty conscience for it and that after all they would not get the beatings that they would have been subjected to if they had failed.

"Nobody is perfect" said one respondent.

"The past remains the past" said another.

Asked on whether they had heard of other students who had cheated in their own class, from other classes in their school and in other schools students outlined their positions as indicated on Tables 4 below.

**Table: 4 Cheating in other classes in my school and in other schools**

Question	Yes	No	No response	Total
Has someone ever cheated in your class?	199 (43.3%)	100 (21.7%)	161 (35%)	460 (100%)
Were they caught cheating?	133 (28.9%)	121 (26.3%)	206 (44.8%)	460 (100%)
Has someone ever cheated in your school?	191 (41.5%)	104 (22.6%)	165 (35.9%)	460 (100%)
Have you ever heard of people in other schools who have cheated in exams?	160 (34.7%)	124 (27.0%)	176 (38.3%)	460 (100%)

Slightly over forty-three percent (43,3%) had heard of someone that had cheated in their own classes while 21,7% had not heard of any. The same strategies outlined on Table 2 above were cited as having been used by students who had cheated. Approximately twenty-nine percent (28,9%) said culprits had been caught while 26,3% said culprits had not been caught. Those who had been caught were punished in the same various ways noted above. The prevalence of cheating in schools was described by the number of times that students had heard of it in their own and other schools. Table 5 below shows how students described the level of prevalence of cheating in schools.

**Table 5: Number of times that cheating has been heard of in schools**

I have heard of cheating taking place at my / other schools	At my school	At another school
Many times	45 (9.8%)	79 (17.2%)
Sometimes	81 (17.5%)	105 (22.8%)
Rarely	91 (19.8%)	36 (7.8%)
Never	50 (10.9%)	38 (8.3%)
Non respondents	193 (42.0%)	202 (43.9%)
Total	460 (100%)	460 (100%)

From the figures on the table and with reference to cheating in their own schools 19.8% had rarely heard of it while 17.5% had sometimes heard of it. The rest, 10.9% had never heard of it. Only 9.8% had heard of cheating in their own schools many times. Concerning the situation in other schools 17.2% had heard of cheating there many times. Approximately twenty-three percent (22.8%) had sometimes heard of cheating in other schools, 7.8% had rarely heard of it and 8.3% had never heard of cheating in other schools.

On subjects where they felt cheating was most common, (151), said it was most common in mathematics while ninety-five (95) said the least cheating was in English. Others falling between these two extremes include history, geography, science, Shona, commerce, practical subjects, English Literature and Bible Knowledge. Of interest are the reasons given for the choice of the two subjects in the extreme cases. For mathematics some respondents said:

“It is a difficult subject which also has many formulae to be learnt by heart”.

“It is easy to use sign language and to write formulae on paper”.

“It is very important for my future, I cannot afford to fail”.

“Most candidates have maths-phobia and that is why they cheat”.

Where a student can move around and talk to colleagues without objections from the supervisor and in subjects where answers are available in textbooks cheating is made easy for students. Further, in situations where teachers are friendly to students and subjects in which the use of a number of items is demanded such as in mathematics (rulers, instruments, rough papers etc) cheating was possible. Teachers who repeated examination questions or situations where the same exercise books are used for both tests and notes made conditions suitable for cheating. Where many candidates sat examinations in the same room at the same time and in subjects where big diagrams are a requirement these can be copied from a distance. In subjects where teachers were said to be lazy or concentrated on a few students the rest of the class tended to resort to cheating. One respondent said:

“Some Gedion Bible versions are small enough to fit into the pockets. One can smuggle it into the exam room without being noticed”.

For those who thought English Language and other subjects were the least targets said:

“The subject requires general knowledge and personal opinion so answers can be different but still correct”.

“Where candidates are few and well spaced it is difficult to cheat”.

In subjects where essay rather than multiple choice answers are required, or where enough time is not provided it is difficult to cheat.

"In subjects where questions ask for things we know from home it may not be necessary to cheat" added one student.

Other areas where cheating may not be necessary are subjects which students feel are easy and are not very important for their future; subjects where teachers are very strict; subjects in which teachers allow students to help each other or where the subject teacher is very good. One respondent made the following comment about Divinity:

"It is a divine subject therefore it is morally wrong to cheat in Divinity".

On whether teachers cheat for students and if so why and how they do it. Their distribution is indicated on table 6.

**Table 6: Teacher involvement in examinations cheating for students in schools**

Question	Yes	No	No response	Total
Do teachers cheat for students?	151 (32.8%)	137 (29.8%)	172 (37.4%)	<b>460</b> <b>(100%)</b>
Are teachers ever caught cheating	66 (14.4%)	203 (44.1%)	191 (41.5%)	<b>460</b> <b>(100%)</b>
On behalf of students?				

About thirty-three percent (32.78%) said that teachers cheat for students. Slightly over forty-four percent (44.1%) said teachers are never caught cheating. Very few (14.6%) said teachers are caught while 29.8% said teachers do not cheat for students. Students who thought teachers cheat went further to say teachers give hints which may be actual answers, sample answers or examination topics before the examinations. Teachers give marks for wrong answers in daily exercises. They also allow students to have more time than necessary during tests, give extra lessons to favoured students during which they dictate approaches on how to answer questions or even ignoring favoured students who cheat during examinations. Other responses went like:

"Teachers bribe ZimSec officials"

"Teachers teach what is in the exam paper"

"They write exams for students".

"They use sign language such as facial expressions when supervising exams".

“They give exam questions as homework”.

Respondents thought teachers cheat because they want bribes; a high pass rate in their subjects for a good reputation and promotion; to impress their girl friends; to please the parents of the students and to help their relatives. Others simply put it as laziness, stupidity or racist on the part of teachers.

“It may be that they simply like the student” one student said.

“It is a cover up for not teaching” another said.

Students suggested that teachers who cheat should be suspended; expelled; counselled; made to pay fines; transferred; have their benefits frozen; just be warned; change classes or should be imprisoned. Others simply said such teachers must be forgiven. Some headmasters and ZimSec officials were also accused of being bribed by teachers and for this reason nothing can possibly be done on such teachers. Other suggestions were that such teachers should never be made to set examination papers; should be talked to nicely; be thoroughly questioned; not teach examination classes; be reported to Ministry of Education and should be put on half or no salary at all. Some suggestions went like:

“They should be severely punished in front of the school”.

“Students should be asked to beat up the teacher”.

“They should be exterminated”.

“Excommunicate the culprit”.

“They must be killed”.

“They are invincible, how I hate it”.

“Teachers are never caught, students are afraid of reporting teachers who cheat for other students”.

Table 7 shows the distribution of respondents on whether there are other people who, together with teachers and students, may be involved in cheating and how often each of these groups are involved. The degree of involvement for each group was rated as either ‘often, sometimes’ or ‘never’.

Table 7: Other people involved in exam cheating and how often

People who cheat	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No responses	Total
Teachers	33 (7.2%)	105 (22.7%)	72 (15.7%)	44 (9.6%)	206 (44.8%)	460 (100%)
Parents	5 (1.0%)	32 (7.0%)	46 (10.0%)	159 (34.6%)	218 (47.4%)	460 (100%)
ZimSec officials	37 (8.0%)	76 (17.0%)	65 (14.0%)	75 (16.0%)	207 (45.0%)	460 (100%)
Students	157 (34.1%)	79 (17.2%)	20 (4.4%)	7 (1.5%)	197 (42.8%)	460 (100%)
School Admin	13 (2.8%)	40 (8.8%)	77 (16.7%)	115 (25.0%)	215 (46.7%)	460 (100%)
School clerks & secretaries	13 (2.8%)	40 (8.7%)	56 (12.2%)	136 (29.6%)	215 (46.7%)	460 (100%)

Other groups identified as partners with teachers and students in cheating are parents, ZimSec officials, school administrators, clerks and secretaries. Topping the list of the 'often' cheaters are students (34.1%) followed by ZimSec officials (8%) and then teachers (7.2%). Very few (1.0%) thought parents are often involved. In fact, the highest (34.6%) said parents are never involved in cheating for students. On the 'never' rating school clerks and secretaries come second (29.6%) then school administrators (25%) and ZimSec officials (16%). Generally students emerge as the major culprits.

Asked to provide their opinions on whether examinations cheating in Zimbabwe was generally increasing, decreasing or has remained at the same level as before, one hundred and eighty-two (39.6%) thought it was increasing.

A.T Sigauke

They blamed the increase in examinations cheating on the emphasis that is being placed on examination results for employment

purposes. Others observed that the increase in cheating is because of lack of examination security especially at ZimSec while some noted that expenses that are often involved in trying to repeat failed subjects led to this problem. The localisation of examination, the lenient punishment of offenders, increased numbers of students leading to overcrowding in schools and teachers who are not teaching seriously are all factors that left students with no option but to cheat. Others said:

“Students do not study until the last minute”.

“It is a trend that follows the national corruption rate, even the minister’s child cheated”.

“It is a result of technological improvements such as the use of calculators and computers in examinations”.

“Examinations are getting tougher and tougher each year”.

“Supervision by unqualified personnel is too relaxed and those who cheat get away with it”.

Some respondents blamed it all on the repetition of examination questions, the prize giving system in schools and the open and guiltless talk about corruption in society sometimes discussed with a sense of heroism. Only twenty-eight (6%) thought examination cheating has remained at the same level for the past few years. These reasoned that reports of cheating are only rumours since no statistics are available on the problem. In fact, supervision of examinations has become stricter than before such that a few cases are now being reported, they said. Others thought that it was only a matter of officers who are now being more thorough in their investigations than before. Examination cheating has always been there. The fifty (10.9%) who thought cheating in examinations was decreasing said this was because supervision of examinations has become stricter than before, that the localisation of examinations has made examinations not so important and therefore cheating does not benefit anyone anymore. Others reasoned that examinations are now very easy to pass; that offenders who have been caught have been severely punished and that education is no longer regarded as of any great value to society. All this has led to a decrease in cheating. Evidence shows that even after cheating few people are passing their examinations, they said. Others added that there are now fewer reports of examination leaks than before. This is because more and more identity documents are now required than before and those who cheat are being arrested, they added. Some expressed sentiments like:

“When examinations are written at the same time it is difficult to cheat”.

“Students are now working very hard and so they don’t see any need to cheat”.

“More people than before are now Christians and cheating is forbidden in Christianity”.

“There are now more resources available”.

“Cheating is like lighting fire onto the clothes that you are wearing”.

On solutions to the problem of cheating in examination students suggested improving sitting arrangements in examination rooms and making sure that students study hard. Some went on to suggest searching homes of ZimSec officials for examination papers and for external inspectors to make unannounced visits to suspected schools during examination times. Others suggested student counselling on the after effects of cheating; the need to employ trained and qualified supervisors; getting teachers not to supervise their own subjects, classes or schools; improving storage security even to the point of hiring security guards or police to man the examination storage premises. Others suggested bringing back the Cambridge examinations and applying heavy penalties like banning culprits forever from writing examinations in Zimbabwe or getting teachers fined or even jailed for cheating. Schools that cheat should be embarrassed by publishing their names in the press; fighting corruption nationally; revamping the economy; checking on candidates' identity; encouraging people to be honest and lastly to pray to God against temptations to cheat. Some statements went like:

“Employ only dedicated teachers in schools”.

“Don't set difficult papers”.

“Devise a machine marking system for examinations”.

“People should not regard failing as the end of ones future, something should be done to assure people that it is not the end of ones life”.

“Nothing can be done on this.”

“Devise a more organised system of delivery of examination papers”.

“I don' t know”.

“To tell you the truth it is hard because once you put rules people have a way to cheat them”.

“Stop the demand for examination qualifications for jobs”.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

From the sentiments expressed in this study and from information gathered from the reviewed literature indications are that there is a problem of cheating in Zimbabwean schools. While the main cheaters are students other groups such as teachers, ZimSec officials and school authorities have received their share of the blame. Cheating takes various forms, different levels of magnitude and in different areas of the student work. Many reasons have been put forward for cheating in examinations and other areas. Solutions to this problem have also been suggested. All in all it is observed that cheating does not benefit the individual's educational and professional growth. For example, a medical student who was used to cheating during his training and who "successfully" completes his course may graduate to be killing his patients when he is practising. For a nation such as Zimbabwe there is need to seriously think on the different views expressed in this study. Reasons for cheating include student laziness, the greed for money, corruption, sexual urge and others. A strategy should be found to decisively deal with this malaise. Many suggestions have been put forward in this paper by the students themselves. This study recommends that a larger study should be carried out at national level and using a larger sample than was the case here in order to confirm or refute observations made in this small case study.

7.0 **References**

- Babalege, T. (1997) **Nigeria: Promoting the Habit of Reading**. Lagos, W.A.E.C.
- Bailey, D. B. (1982) **Methods of Social Research**. New York, The Free Press.
- Barnhart, S.S. and Barnhart, R.K. (1980) **The Second Barnhart Dictionary of New English**. New York, Barnhart Books.
- Bray, M; Clarke, P.B. and Stephens, D. (1986) **Education and Society in Africa**. London, Edward Arnolds.
- Chifamba, T. (2001) "ZimSec should act now to curb exam leakage" *in the Zimbabwe Herald* (Monday 19/11/2001 p9).
- Cleveland, W.A. (ed.) (1988) **The Encyclopaedia Britannica Annuals**. Chicago, C.U.P.
- Dore, D. (1976) **The Diploma Disease: Education, Qualifications and Development**. London, Unwin Educational Books
- Herald Reporter, (2003) "Parliamentary committee on exams" *in the Zimbabwe Herald* (Friday 17/01/2003 p6).
- Herald Reporter, (2002) "Man charged over exam leaks" *in the Zimbabwe Herald* (Wednesday 10/04/2002 p3).
- Herald Reporter, (2001) "Exam scam lands youth in prison" *in the Zimbabwe Herald* (Monday 17/12/2001 p3).
- Isemede, S.T. Okwe, E.N. and Fabyan, E. (1990) **Test Development and Administration Process: JAMB Experience**. *in* Denga, D.I. et al (eds.) (1990) **Test Development and Administration in Nigeria: Problems and Solutions**. Lagos, W.A.E.C.
- Lewin, K.M. (1993) "Education and development: the Issues and the Evidence" *in Education Research*. Serial No.6 ODA.
- Mpofu, I. (2001) "Preventing exam leaks" *in the Zimbabwe Herald* (Friday 16/11/2001 p8).
- Mutema, T. (2001) "Exam cheating rife at campus" *in The Varsity Times* (2001, p3).

A.T Sigauke

- Oxenham, J. (1984) **Education versus Qualifications**. London, George Allen and Unwin.
- Salami, S. (1990) Test Development Process: The W.A.E.C. Experience. *in* Denga, D.I. et al (eds.) (1990) **Test Development and Administration in Nigeria: Problems and Solutions**. Lagos, W.A.E.C.
- Sunday Mail Reporter, (2001) "Exam markers getting a raw deal from ZimSec" *in* **The Sunday Mail** (Sunday 10/11/2001 p9).



This work is licensed under a  
Creative Commons  
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs  
<http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/>