



Full Length Research Paper

Perceived Actors of National Examination Cheating: The Case of Bale and West Arsi Zones' Secondary and Preparatory Schools, Oromia Region, Ethiopia

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**Abstract**

*The main objective of this research was to identify actors of national examination cheating. Convergent parallel mixed design was used. Data was collected from 488 teachers via self-administered questionnaire. Besides, interview and focus group discussion guides were held with key informants. The quantitative data was analyze and presented by graph while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The finding indicated that the perceived role of students were more than 10% more likely that they participated in cheating. Next to students, school principals' involvement was found to be more than 8%, followed by supervisors, police officers, district education personals, chiefs and invigilators 5.7%, 5.1%, 3.9%, 1.2% and 1%, respectively. Moreover, key informants suggested that the school directors are the ones who are mainly forced by the government educational institutions. Furthermore, key informants reported as the positions are being kept longer depending on the number of students who pass national examination. The result shows when the national examination was given, out of the cheatings happened is attributed to the chain of all actors which is accounts for more than 35%. It was found that, technology based cheating like sending short message via mobile and social media service is found to be a great medium for exam theft alongside traditional means. Finally, the study recommended that school directors should work for propose of producing quality graduates who will be able to work for the realization of the country's vision rather than passing many students by displacement for the sake of getting reinforcements.*

**Key words:** Actors, Cheating, Ethiopia, National Examination, Oromia

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## **Introduction**

Examination is an instrument to assess or evaluate the attainment of knowledge and skill (Abiola and Olabisi, 2014). According to Kellaghann and Greaney (2003) most of African countries operate three major examinations which are given by agency outside the school. In Ethiopia there are three types of examinations which are given to the examinees at different education structures. For instance, primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations which is prepared and administrated by the respective Regional Education Bureau. The second type of exam is named as Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination which is given by Ministry of Education (MOE) and National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency. The third examination is University Entrance Examination which is given at the end of preparatory schools (MOE, 2012).

Past finding shows that the outcomes of a teaching and learning process are ascertained through examination. It determines how much and to what extent investments in the educational sector are yielding desired dividends (Mkpacited in Olusola, and Samson, 2015). Study has shown us that as far as examination misconduct is concerned, the first and most important persons to discourage cheating are teachers, school leaders, parents and examiners (Alutu and Aluede, 2006). Nevertheless, research finding suggested that the examination system of most countries is plagued with examination misconducts (Onuka and Durowoju, 2013).

Furthermore the existing evidences have revealed that particularly in some countries education stakeholders are interfering national examination normal way of administration due to different reasons. For instance, in Nigeria societies participated in national examination cheating because they need to see the certificate of their children instead of assisting them via material provision and availing any necessary inputs need for exam preparation (Anagbogu and

Idajor, 2016). A kin to this, research done in Japan by Kusayanagi (2013) found that parents and school teachers involved in the process as supporters and helpers.

Many research work disclosed that teachers commitment in teaching learning process are above all a key to maintain quality of education by implication deter examination misconduct. To this end, Ajayi (2005) found that the quality of teachers in an educational service determines to a very large extent, the quality and standard of the educational system. Similarly, Jimoh *et al.*(2013) noted that the quality of instruction depends on the performance of teachers.

Nevertheless Stanculescu (2013) noted that low teachers' attention during the exams and competition among concerned bodies were found to be statistically significant relationship with examination misconduct. Similarly, Adow *et al.* (2015) found that lack of effective supervision of students during examinations were significantly associated with cheating.

The study by Njoku and Njoku(2016) indicated that examination malpractice takes different forms which are happen before, during and after the examination According to Nyamoita and Otieno (2016) in Kenya public secondary schools the major types of examination malpractice include collusion to cheat/coping from one another, possessing past materials during examination, storing information on cell phones, colluding with subject teachers and leakages among others.

According to Njoku and Njoku (2016) during examination, agent/s exchange answers by short message system to other students anywhere in the country. Likewise, Kusayanagi (2013) a research done in Japan found that technology based cheating (Phone cheating) was found to be a common that the examinees keep their hands tucked into their pockets to secretly use it. The other form of examination cheating is the

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post examination malpractices include activities after examination such as, a supervisor leaving the envelope containing examination scripts open on previous arrangement before sealing and submitting it to the examination body (Njoku and Njoku, 2016).

Moreover, examination in Africa serve a number of important functions which reflects the social and educational contexts in which they are administered (Kellaghann and Greaney, 2003). On the other hand, Olatunbosun (2009) found that examination malpractice leads to irreversible loss of credibility. Consequently, according to this researcher its implication is that documents emanating from such country will be treated with suspicion. Therefore, this study was intended to identify perceived actors of national examination cheating and the perceived form of cheating

### **Methods and Materials**

#### **Research Design**

Convergent parallel mixed methods design was used. According to Creswell (2013) mixed methods are recommended when the issue needs multiple perspectives of understanding. Besides, among four perspectives for mixed methods research the researchers employed pragmatism the most commonly used model. The researchers were selected this assumption because the pragmatic researcher is able to maintain both subjectivity in their own reflections on research and objectivity in data collection and analysis (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

#### **Participants**

Teachers who participated in Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination and University Entrance Examination given at grade 10 and 12 respectively as invigilator, supervisor and center chief in 2014 and 2015 were the population of this study. Accordingly, from 14 selected districts of the two zones a total of 488 teachers were randomly selected for the purpose of this research. In addition, the respective school director, districts education office heads, experienced teachers and zonals examination

heads were purposively selected. This is mainly to explore their pertinent experiences with regard to examination cheating. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 59 years (Mean  $37.28 \pm 9.07$ ).

#### **Measures**

The researchers were used questionnaire with teachers. It has different sections. The first one is items measure participants' socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, age, teaching experiences, name of zone and schools. The Second part of questionnaire focused on the perceived actors of national examination cheating.

Semi-structured interview questions were employed in order to get data from school directors, districts education office head and zonals assessment heads. The content of the semi-structured item focused on by which means the perceived actors of national examination cheating engage themselves in cheating process besides asking the perpetrators. On the other hand, four focus group discussion guides were held with senior teachers at four schools of study areas. In all places participation in the interviews was voluntary and the discussion was passionate and exhaustive. It was supported with tape recorder and taking notes.

The quality of research finding could be assured in many ways. For instance, Philipp (2014) noted that in social science research, the classical quality criteria are attributed to independence of research findings from the person of the researcher, reliability and validity.

Consequently, the researchers have no any intention to include their own opinions on the results other than the original data results. More importantly, since the data were collected from diverse participants such as teachers, school directors, each districts education office heads, and zonal levels education stakeholders the finding by itself triangulate each other.

To check acceptability and consistency of the tool pilot test was made with five percent of teachers and accordingly modification was done. Similarly to check the validity of the tools, it was shown to two senior instructors teaching at Madda Walabu University College of Education and Behavioral Studies who are experts on the area and then their agreement on each item was taken as a tool of validation.

### **Procedure of Data collection**

Research ethical approval letter was taken from Madda Walabu University research and publication directorate. Then, it was given to each zones education office in order to get permission from selected districts. Likewise, the districts education office heads wrote letter to their respective schools. Alongside formal letter written by officials working in respective offices, the researchers informed the participants the purpose of the research and ethical issues.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics namely graph was used to identify actors of national examination cheating. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Therefore, themes and categories were compared among the different respondent groups such as the school principals, districts education office heads, zonals' assessment heads, and teachers

### **Results and Discussions**

As for the first objective, for instance, if we take national examination candidates, their role was more than 10% more likely that they participated in this wrong doing (Figure 1). This is similar with many key informants' experiences that each and every student who seats for national examination in rural schools collects about one hundred birr to invite chiefs, supervisors and invigilators to facilitate exam theft. Desalegn and Berhan (2014) in their research done on university students reported that about 12.1% (95% CI = 10.2-13.9) of students disclosed cheating on the entrance examination before they join higher

education. Therefore, though these two studies take different study participants, slight differences are found between these results. Next to students, school principals' involvement was found to be more than 8%, followed by supervisors, police, district personals and chiefs 5.7%, 5.1%, 3.9% and 1.2% respectively. On the other hand, the finding suggests that the invigilators' share is the least one which is 1% compared to other actors.

Teachers who were participated in focus group discussion at all study sites came to conclude that as far as the national examination cheating is concerned, the school directors are the ones who are mainly forced by the government educational institutions. Moreover, these key informants were elaborated as the positions are being kept longer depending on the number of students who pass national examination.

Furthermore, from their experience of invigilating national examination, teachers were reported that school directors convince examination bodies by preparing well-coming ceremonies for chiefs, supervisors and invigilatorsto help their students to pass their examination. Besides, the interviewees illustrated the above idea by using Oromo proverb "*namni waliin nyaate wal hin nyaatuu*" which is literally translated as those who ate together will be kind for one another. Consequently, according to participants' experience the chief, supervisor and invigilators accept directors' idea and create enabling conditions for examination malpractice by leaving their responsibility behind. Similarly, study conducted in Negiria by Alutu, and Aluede (2006) reveled that school principals arrange communal cheating for their schools believing that when their students do very well, it will attract other students who may not believe in working hard.

On the other hand, one director attributed examination menace to invigilators. In his view, the school directors were not engage themselves in teaching the subject matter most of the time

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but they spend their time on working in an office such as filling different forms and writing a report. He further insisted that since teachers were familiar with their subject matter unlike directors, they were playing the lion share at a time in many ways.

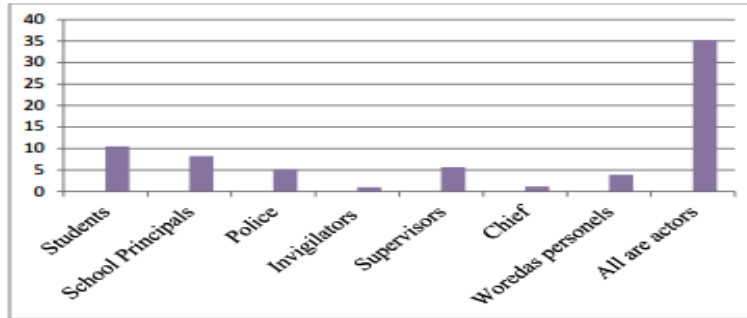
During national examination time, the commitment of center chiefs alongside others examination bodies is very crucial to decide the quality of examination administration no matter how there are many challenges come from different bodies. To this end, however, study participants reported that it is only few supervisors and chiefs who were acting accordingly. The majority of study participants reported that this is due to fear of defamation campaign from the side of local societies if they resist cheating. Moreover, according to these key informants, since directors of the schools and societies want to have good image by helping their students on doing examination, they do not like chief, supervisors and invigilators who were serious on their work. Previous research by Stanculescu (2013) noted that low teachers' attention during the exams and competition among concerned bodies were found to be statistically significant relationship with examination misconduct.

Like other stakeholders, participants who have shared similar experiences as chief, supervisors and invigilators were all noted that police is reluctant at a time even if he/she is responsible

body to stop illegal practices of any actors. Finally, the worst and more surprising thing is that when the national examination was given, out of the cheatings happened is attributed to the chain of all actors which is accounts for more than 35% (see figure 1 below). The qualitative data analysis also substantiates omnipresent involvement of all examination agents.

For instance, senior teachers who participated in focus group discussion clarified that the pre organized and irresponsible cheating action of education stakeholders during national examination by saying; *"when we were acting as a supervisor and chief, we have seen that the situation was very serious. It seems something customary because starting from zonal education office to school guards they highly encourage it."*

They further stated that instead of preparing their students in good manner, these stakeholders exchange information about chiefs, supervisors and invigilators assigned to their school. This is because they wanted to extend network of exam cheating among chiefs, supervisors and invigilators according to their responses. The present finding is strongly supported by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education report (2012) that because of irresponsible conduct of invigilators, supervisors, center chiefs, school directors, police officers and district examination officers' national examination cheating is found at high risk.



**Figure 1: Shows Perceived Actors of National Examination Cheating encounter in 2014 and 2015, March, 2017**

The finding revealed that the schools use different means of exam cheating. For example, the majority of participants reported that some of them provide answer key for students. Besides, the researchers investigated that the candidates brought with them the previous subject sheet and put it in front of their desk. This is just to throw out the current exam booklet sheet to be done by actors sit outside the exam room so that the answer key came to the exam session.

On the other hand, analysis suggests that some schools make their students to be distributed to different schools as if there was shortage of classroom in main schools. This is intended to weaken the supervision activities of chiefs, supervisors and others. As a result, it creates conducive environment for the actors to engage themselves in the examination cheating process. Similarly, as one participant who was acting as invigilator at Jera Secondary school of Bale Zone illustrated his experience, the school made a hole through the whole of the classroom and tie rope on it that can help them to pass the booklet sheet outside and also to bring back the answer key into the exam room.

Unlike previous time where cheating was under taken through old methods, currently the finding indicated that technology based cheating like sending short message via mobile and social media service are found to be a great medium for

exam theft. According to the majority of key informants, to be successful with such mechanism of theft, students hide their cell phone in the school compound before the examination date so that they can easily take it and exchange the answer among one another. It is well-known that social media today connects all nation of the world sooner than later regardless of their color, sex, being grew up in well to do countries, developing or poor. However, in the countries like Ethiopia where its advancement is found to be at young age, the misuse of this media by its citizens as a means of cheating perhaps erode the academic integrity of new generation unless all concerned bodies combat it. Cheating via using modern technology is also more persistent in Nigerian examination system that agents exchanged answer keys through short message system to other students (Njoku and Njoku, 2016). A study conducted in Japan also noted that technology based cheating (Phone cheating) was found to be prevalent (Kusayanagi, 2013).

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

**Conclusion**

The finding indicated that the perceived role of students were more than 10% more likely that they participated in cheating. Next to students, school principals' involvement was found to be more than 8%, followed by supervisors, police officers, district education personals, chiefs and

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invigilators 5.7%, 5.1%, 3.9%, 1.2% and 1% respectively. Moreover, key informants suggested that the school directors are the ones who are mainly forced by the government educational institutions. Furthermore, key informants reported as the positions are being kept longer depending on the number of students who pass national examination. The result shows when the national examination was given, out of the cheatings happened is attributed to the chain of all actors which is accounts for more than 35%. It was found that, technology based cheating like sending short message via mobile and social media service is found to be a great medium for exam theft alongside traditional means. Finally, the study recommended that school directors should work for propose of producing quality graduates who will be able to work for the realization of the country's vision rather than passing many students by displacement for the sake of getting reinforcements.

### Recommendations

- It is better if the National Educational Assessment and Examinations Agency and Ministry of Education create secrete means of reporting cheating done by any actors and it is also recommended if security officials will be there.
- School directors should work for propose of producing quality graduates who will be able to work for the realization of the country's vision rather than passing many students by displacement for the sake of getting reinforcements.
- Theft is a bad habit in Ethiopian culture the same holds true for the exam. Therefore, the parents and communities should struggle to assist and teach their children basic moral values.

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### Conflict of interest

Authors should declare there is no conflict of interest among researchers and ensure that they are responsible for any conflict of interest that may arise.

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