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## EXAMINERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDE TOWARD MARKING AS DETERMINANTS OF KNOWLEDGE OF MALPRACTICE INDICATORS

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### Abstract

Examination malpractice has invaded Nigeria and has increased in tempo despite measures intended to curb it. It is therefore not in doubt that some stakeholders and policy makers in the educational sector today including teachers who combine public examining duties may not be knowledgeable enough to track the "menace" while marking. This study, therefore investigated the existing relationship between personal characteristics, attitude toward marking and examiners' knowledge of examination malpractice indicators. The study is a descriptive research that never manipulated any independent variable but adopted a correlational approach. Four hundred and fifty NECO examiners were drawn using multi – stage sampling technique from nine marking centres in three of the six states of the south west. The two questionnaires used for data collection were Examiners' Attitude Towards Marking Scale ( $r = 0.6$ ) and Examiners' Knowledge of Malpractice Indicators ( $r = 0.6$ ). The data collected were analysed using multiple regression analysis with alpha level set at 0.05. The study revealed that all the predictor variables had a composite influence on examiners' knowledge of examination malpractice indicators ( $R = .355$ ,  $F_{8,441} = 7.957$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ): number of year(s) of marking with NECO ( $\beta = -.200$ ), location of marking ( $\beta = -.278$ ) and attitude towards marking ( $\beta = .157$ ) were found to have significant contribution to examiners' knowledge of examination malpractice. The findings have implications for examination bodies, examiners and stakeholders in educational sector. It was recommended that there should be intensive training and re-training for all the examiners by the examination bodies where issues related to detection of examination malpractice cases while marking will be discussed. Production of handbook on the indicators of examination malpractice is recommended.

**Keywords:** Examiners' Characteristics, Attitude towards Marking, Knowledge, Malpractice Indicators.

### Introduction

Most available records point to the fact that examination leakages are very old practice in Nigeria. Adeyegbe (2005) reported that examination malpractice was first reported in Nigeria in 1914 (incidentally the year Nigeria's North and South were

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amalgamated) when the questions of the Senior Cambridge Local Examinations were obtained before the examinations were taken. Examination leakages have featured regularly since then. According to Adewale (2006), the examination malpractice still persists despite public campaigns and enlightenment programmes embarked on by government and non-governmental organization on the need for elimination of examination malpractice. Adewale further stressed that, it also seems that the society is now accustomed to and comfortable with examination malpractice, the reason for this might be the fact that, only an insignificant number of persons are genuinely involved in the campaign against it (Ijaiya, 2008). Furthermore, examiners who are in most cases teachers themselves, ought to easily detect when students engaged in examination malpractice, especially mass dubbing or copying (Adeyegbe, 2005). Adeyegbe reported that answers are written for students on chalkboard and sometimes photo copied materials are circulated to provide illegal support for students during examination. Grasp knowledge on the part of an examiner is required to detect scripts of candidates that are so involved.

Ayanwale (2014) reported that, there are indications recently, that examining bodies have improved on securing examination papers, which reduces leakages, yet, students continue to devise new methods of cheating, some of these methods include smuggling of prepared scripts into examination halls, impersonation, swapping of answer scripts, scribbling on blades of ceiling fans, shirts, trousers, skirts and of recent, text messages on cell phones. Nowadays, students find it difficult to defend their certificates just because of involvement in this menace. The act is giving stakeholders in the educational system great concern. According to Arowogun (2010), the situation is worse when compared with the past, when students would be proud of Grade 1, Grade II, even Grade III. As many that passed then were competent enough to defend their certificates. Arowogun further reported that, in the olden days, school certificate holders used to be engaged to teach secondary school students and they used to perform well. Nowadays, many graduates are found wanting in their areas of specialization. According to Kayode (2010), the way and manner examinations are conducted in Nigeria these days, may not only rubbish the examination process but also mar the entire education system.

Adenisha, Ogidigbo and Bassey (2010) linked the source of the falling standard of education to the poor nature of the examination process. According to them, examination is a pivot point around which the nation's education system revolves and the success or failure of the system of examination is an indicator of the quality of graduates the various institutions turnout every year. According to Nurani (2008), most foreigners view some of the academic certificates being issued to graduates in Nigeria as not being more valuable than the piece of paper on which they are printed. However, Greatorex and Suto (2006), opined that General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination marking is a diverse activity, encompassing a wide range of subjects with a variety of question styles and marking schemes. GCSE plays a crucial role in secondary education and the process of marking. It is a key determinant feature in the lives of children within eighteen (18) years old and above, this age serves as the prime (youthful)



age of every child because it is crucial age for human development as children transit to adulthood at this age. Academic decisions reached on their behalf by examiners could have far reaching implications on their future. The judgment and decision-making process involved in the marking of some kinds of examination have received some serious consideration among researchers, such as, Cumming (1990); Webster, Pepper and Jenkins (2000); Laming, (2004); and. The degree to which examiners possess knowledge of examination malpractice indicators is highly important in passing such judgement while marking.

Certain factors might correlate with the degree knowledge of examination malpractice indicators possessed by the examiners. It has been discovered that examiners behaviour or attitude varies with different groups such as professional background, subject specialist and gender (Hamp-Lyons, 1990; Vann Lovenz & Meyer, 1991) due to their distinct frame of reference and Robson, (2002) discovered that masculinity/femininity of the rater and the task performed can affect the raters judgements. Furthermore, Greatorex and Bell (2004) reported that examiners' characteristics such as age, sex, occupation (teaching or non-teaching) rank, qualification and location as well as attitude of examiners' toward marking might be possible factors that might influence knowledge of malpractice indicators. Royal-Dawson (2004) reported that one will expect that the more examiners are engaged in marking the more knowledge they will acquire which in turn increase their accuracy in detection of various forms of malpractice while marking, but this might not necessarily be so.

It is in line with the above background that the researchers decided to embark on this study, to critically analyze the influence of examiners' characteristics and attitude towards marking exercise on examiners' knowledge of examination malpractice indicators in public examination in Nigeria with respect to National Examinations Council (NECO).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The poor quality of school leavers from the different tiers of educational system has become a very worrisome trend. Concerned stakeholders, patriotic to the course of this country (Nigeria) are not relenting in their effort at ensuring that things turn around for the better. The details of possible causes are sought and attempts at providing solutions have become the concern of most researchers. If curriculum provisions are adequate and the criteria for passing candidates are adhered to by those charged with the responsibility to do so (examiners), then persons holding academic certificates should be able to defend them functionally or otherwise. Examinations may not be the true test of knowledge, but persons who had passed examinations genuinely by a dint of hard work should have so much to show in that regard. If examination malpractice is controlled for, then the success of any incompetent student in an examination will be an indictment on one person - the examiner, who might have been compromised or simply not fit for the job.

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Examiners mark to a common standard and a common interpretation of marking scheme to avoid putting some testees in advantaged or disadvantaged position. In addition, aberrant marking can also affect the integrity of an awarded certificate. In as much as the problem of poor quality of graduates caused by incompetence or inadequacies on the part of examiners is receiving technological attention, it is still difficult, if not impossible, to completely do away with humans in the marking of candidates examination scripts. This is what makes this study important. However, examination malpractice is an illegal and unethical activity in which a candidate involves himself or herself alongside agent of examination (consciously) in order for the candidate to obtain a result or score capable of ranking him a high achiever of academics or getting him an outstanding result beyond his or her academic capability. This study therefore attempted to investigate the existing relationship between personal characteristics, attitude toward marking and examiners' knowledge of examination malpractice indicators.

### **Hypothesis/Research Question**

Based on the background, one hypothesis was tested and a research question answered:

1. There will be no significant composite contribution of examiners' characteristics (sex, age, occupation, rank of an examiner, highest qualification, location, years of marking) and attitude towards marking to the knowledge of malpractice indicators?
2. What are the relative contributions of examiners' characteristics and attitude towards marking to knowledge of malpractice indicators?

### **Methodology**

The study is a descriptive research that never manipulated any independent variable but adopted a correlational approach to describe the existing phenomena. The target population for this study comprises of teachers from tertiary institution, public and private secondary schools and others that participated in the marking exercise of National Examinations council. The reason for this choice was that, they were in the best position to give information to the researcher about their knowledge of malpractice indicators. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. Three states were randomly selected from six states of the south west and three marking centres from each of them respectively. Fifty examiners were selected from each of the selected centres for equal representation. In all, four hundred and fifty (450) NECO examiners were used for the study.

Two questionnaires were developed, validated via trial tested data and used by the researchers for data collection in this study. 1) Examiners Attitude Towards Marking (EATM) was developed by the researchers. This is a construct-validated sixteen item questionnaire structured in a modified four point Likert scale response options. Factor analysis was used to establish the construct validity of the questionnaire and the communalities estimates ranged between 0.6 and 0.9. Cronbach alpha was also used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient of 0.6 was obtained. 2) Examiners Knowledge Of Examination Malpractice Indicators (EKMI) was

developed by the researchers. This is also a construct-validated fifteen item questionnaire structured in a modified four point Likert scale response options with communalities estimates ranged between 0.5 and 0.8 using the data collected from 50 examiners outside the sample. Cronbach alpha was also used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient is 0.6. The content validity of EKMI was established by using NECO examination malpractice sanction book to develop the items for the examiners.

The researchers visited the marking centres to see the venue coordinator in order to seek permission to use examiners for the research. The researcher interacted with the staff of NECO at the centre as well as the examiners to establish good rapport. Eighteen (18) research assistants were trained for this study; two (2) per each of the centres. In each of the sampled centre, the research assistants distributed the instrument to the respondents and gave instructions on how to fill them. After the administration of the instruments, the research assistants collected the instruments back for analysis. Linear Regression analysis was employed to answer the two research questions.

**Results**

**Hypothesis One**

There will be no significant composite contribution of examiners’ characteristics and attitude towards marking to the knowledge of malpractice indicators?  
Multiple regression analysis was employed to obtain results to answer question one.

**Table 1: Regression Summary Showing Composite contribution of examiners characteristics and attitude towards marking to knowledge of examination malpractice indicators**

R= 0.355					
R square = 0.126					
Adjusted R square =0.110					
Model	Sum of square	Df	Means square	F	Sig.
Regression	2151.755	8	268.969	7.957	0.001
Residual	14906.176	441	33.801		
Total	17057.931	449			

Table 1 shows that multiple regression correlation coefficient indicating the composite contribution of examiners’ characteristics (sex, age, occupation, rank of an examiner, highest qualification, location, years of experience) and attitude towards marking to the knowledge of malpractice indicators is 0.355. The adjusted R square is 0.110, this means that the independent variables accounted for 11.0% variation in the examiners’ knowledge of malpractice indicators. Also, it has been further ascertained using multiple regression ANOVA which produced  $F_{(8,441)} = 7.957$ ;  $P < 0.05$ . This

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indicated there is significant linear relationship between the predictor variables and examiners knowledge of malpractice indicators.

**Research Question One**

What is the relative contribution of examiner's characteristics and attitude towards knowledge of examination malpractice indicators?

**Table 2: Coefficients Showing relative contribution of examiners characteristics and attitude towards marking to knowledge of malpractice indicators.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	33.457	3.527		9.487	0
Sex	0.677	0.809	0.038	0.837	0.403
Age	0.078	0.077	0.091	1.011	0.313
Years of marking	-0.469	0.224	-0.2	-2.09	0.037
Occupation	0.785	1.512	0.024	0.519	0.604
Highest Qualification	-0.122	0.291	-0.021	-0.421	0.674
Rank of an examiner	0.494	0.733	0.037	0.674	0.501
Location	-0.664	0.109	-0.278	-6.071	0.00
Attitude toward marking	0.23	0.067	0.157	3.425	0.001

Table 1 shows that among the independent variables, only years of marking ( $\beta = -0.200$ ,  $t = -2.090$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), Location of marking ( $\beta = -0.278$ ,  $t = -6.071$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and attitude towards marking ( $\beta = 0.157$ ,  $t = 3.425$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) were found to have significant relative contributions towards examiners knowledge of examination malpractice indicators.

**Discussions**

The study revealed that (years of marking, location and attitude towards marking) were most potent factors that influenced examiners knowledge of examination malpractice indicators. However, the new examiners are more severe in detecting malpractice cases while marking compare to their old markers. It means, old markers are too familiar with the process with less aspiration to reach higher status in the examining

job. Unlike the new ones who are ready to dissipate energy and make positive impact by paying attention to details as contained in the guidelines on marking process. This can also be substantiated by Royal-Dawson (2004) that year of marking may not justify the competence displayed, if it does, it might be in reverse order. One will expect that the more examiners are engaged in marking the more knowledge they will acquire which in turn increase their accuracy and detection of various forms of malpractice while marking. The finding has proved this assertion wrong. New examiners with their knowledge of malpractice indicators can detect malpractice cases so as not to allow those testees without dint of hardworking to go scot free but the experienced might be permissive to let go the offenders. Also, the area where a particular examiner marked, can influence belief, custom, and norms of such examiner holds. Examiners from Urban location possessed better knowledge that their counterpart from rural areas. Several sensitization abound in the cities on issues that bother the society. Less of such sensitization can be found in the rural areas. Ayanwale (2014) corroborated the finding that rural dwellers possess lower knowledge on examination malpractice when compared with their counterpart in the city. Attitude towards marking can influence knowledge of examination malpractice since attitude could be positive or negative. Greatorex and Bell (2004) asserted that attitude are feelings related to a person or event and their resulting behaviour. This means when an individual has to respond quickly to something, disposition can guide person's reaction. This can be positive or negative views of a particular person, object, thing or event. So, detecting cases of malpractice can be traceable to the examiners attitude towards marking.

### **Conclusion**

Attitude to marking is discovered to be the only isolated factor that can influence knowledge of examination malpractice indicators significantly. Examiners that will remain relevant in the business of marking needed to cease from unprofitable attitude that can mar their efficiency and frustrate the confidence reposed in them. Marking will soon be a job for the prepared, regardless of the location, and years of marking, one the things that will matter will be the level of knowledge of examination malpractice indicators possessed.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

- Effort should be made by the examination body in spelling out the criteria for selection of any prospective examiner.
- Centres for the marking should be made conducive for marking exercise, because the way examiners are treated can influence their attitude which will consequently influence knowledge acquisition about malpractice issues
- Examination body should endeavour to extend the period of marking exercise to include thorough training, to enhance examiners' knowledge of the business.

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