

Evaluation of Exam Cheating state in Kenyan Schools: A Follow-Up of Work on Cheating in Exams in Masaba Sub County 2013, Kisii County

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Abstract Efforts by many actors to curb examination cheating are achieving some good success. The government of Kenya on her part has expressed her intention to continue stepping up the exam pre-monitoring exercise and monitoring during in a crescendo process. The aim of this paper is to carry out an evaluation of the state of exam cheating in kenyan schools: a follow-up of work on cheating in exams in masaba sub county, kisii county, Kenya. The study objectives were to examine how prevalent cheating has been in Kenya's schools, what the impact has been, what the research by the author of 2013 reveals on why students cheat in exams? what measures have been taken at the national and school level to address it? if those measures are working? And what else could be done to prevent the menace of exam cheating? The paper used secondary data sources to investigate the operations cheating in exams. The research results will indicate the state of cheating in exams and give recommendations on what needs to be as a way forward.

Keywords: exam, cheating, school, monitoring, students, Kenya

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1. Background

Cheating in an exam is never right, both taking as well as providing someone with the answer's harms in the long run. I have seen so many people who get through exams with dishonest means and at the end of the year, those same people are the ones who complain about the education system the most. At the end of their academic year, all they have to say is that they learnt almost nothing and that whatever they learnt was pointless. But we know that a tool is only as good as one who wields it.

[1] Cheating deprives people of their fair reward and appreciation. It is one of the reasons for our moral conflicts. Who do you think will be praised more? A cheater who got an A+ or a hard worker who got a B? Hint: the one who didn't get the B. The hard worker will be contented because he got what he worked for and will try harder in subsequent exams, but society will pull him down for not being as good as the one who got an A. Thus, the whole moral framework of the children is affected by this act of cheating. They will be encouraged to get things done in the right way and they lose on the simple, yet powerful lessons life has to teach us, hard work, patience and honesty.

Shariffuddin & Holmes [2] in their recent empirical studies indicate that cheating by post-secondary students

is prevalent in many countries. This study attempted to explore academic dishonesty among students at Terengganu Advanced Technical Institute University College (TATIUC) in Malaysia. Cheating techniques, preventive measures and the support required by lecturers to handle cheating incidents were examined. Six former students who were confirmed cheaters and two lecturers and administrators at TATIUC participated in the study. Data were collected by using narrative responses and interviews. The results showed that creative and innovative techniques were used to cheat successfully. Some of these ways students use are a water bottle trick where students write test answers on the backside of the label of the bottle. The student is careful to look at the bottle to copy the answers. Another effective way to cheat that many students use to get high test scores, they then use pencil or pen to write answers on their nails so as to read the tiny notes as a thought-provoking strategy during the examination. Use of a hidden side of a hat where students hide answers and test solutions because people won't notice the hidden side if a student wears a baseball cap or any other suitable hat; Writing correct answers on the desk is an effective solution to cheating because desk modifications at a classroom will let you leave solutions and answers to the toughest questions

It was also found that participants believed that even if preventive measures were taken, it was not possible to stop academic cheating entirely although it could be

deterred to a certain extent. Furthermore, it was discovered that there were variations in the implementation of examination rules and regulations by lecturers. Finally, the study revealed that support in terms of training and courses was needed to deal with academic dishonesty.

Academic cheating is defined as representing someone else's work as your own. It can take many forms: from sharing another's work to purchasing a term paper or test questions in advance, to paying another to take a test or do the work for you.

Jaffe [3] Statistics show that academic cheating among high-school and college students has risen dramatically during the past 50 years. The results of the 29th *Who's Who among American High School Students Poll* (of 3,123 high-achieving 16- to 18-year olds – that is, students with A or B averages who plan to attend college after graduation) were released in November, 1998. Among the findings:

- 80% of the country's best students cheated to get to the top of their class.
- More than half the students surveyed said that they don't think cheating is a big deal.
- 95% of cheaters say they were not caught.
- 40% cheated on a quiz or a test
- 67% copied someone else's homework

According to the results of a 1998 survey of 20,829 middle and high school students nationwide conducted by the *Josephson Institute of Ethics*, 70% of high school students and 54% of middle school students said they had cheated on an exam in the last 12 months. According to Josephson, the same question asked of high schoolers in 1996 prompted 64% to admit they had cheated. This demonstrates a 6% increase in only two years.

For most students, the truth is that they cheat because they did not do the work required to obtain the grade they wish to have. As many explained in their answers, laziness, lack of preparation, poor time management, poor study habits, bad teaching, all contribute to the perceived need to cheat [4].

However, I propose there is one other reason. Pressure. Some students have so much riding on their success. Whether it comes from the parents/family or from their own internal desire to succeed, they feel like they cannot leave anything to chance and it drives them to dishonesty. I've had students suffer mental breakdowns because of the pressure the family had placed upon them to succeed in school. They abandoned all their passions in order to fit in more test prep and tutoring time, and still the test scores didn't measure up to their parents' expectations.

Shariffuddin & Holmes [2] continue to note that there are a number of reasons that people prefer to cheat during exams and tests. A few common ones are listed below (might or might not have been used by me)

- Lack of quality teaching - Not pointing any fingers but sometimes students tend to get teachers that like doing everything in class other than what they are actually paid to do. Reading directly from the book without explaining, just giving assignments so that students keep busy instead of asking questions, excessive punishment to deter aforementioned asking questions etc. A lack of fundamental understanding of the subject makes cheating a viable alternative for students.

- Pressure - The amount of pressure that students are put under is insane. Stating that every test will play a hand in shaping your future does more harm than good. Instead of motivating students to actually sit down and study it rather makes them petrified of failing and they turn to the alternative of cheating.
- Sheer laziness – most learners who are lazy in class prefer to occupy the last benches in a class and with their wit, sarcasm and perfectly timed comments they sometimes manage to make boring lectures fun. Although this group which might as well be smarter than the toppers of the batch they usually lack the firmness of purpose and will to avoid cheating hence depending or depend on the benevolence of the people around them in exam halls.
- Failed up System that gives more importance to grades and marks on a scale rather than actual knowledge.

<https://www.ukessays.com> [5] consequences of cheating can be hard for a tween or teen to understand. Without the ability to see the long-term effects, children may feel that the pros of cheating (good grades) outweigh any negatives. That's why it's important for parents and teachers to explain the consequences of cheating, such as:

- Cheating lowers your self-respect and confidence. And if others see you cheating, you will lose their respect and trust.
- Unfortunately, cheating is usually not a one-time thing. Once the threshold of cheating is crossed, youth may find it easier to continue cheating more often, or to be dishonest in other situations in life. Students who cheat lose an element of personal integrity that is difficult to recapture. It damages a child's self-image.
- Students who cheat are wasting their time in school. Most learning builds on itself. A child must first learn one concept so that they are prepared for the next lesson. If they don't learn the basic concept, they have set themselves up to either continue failing or cheating.
- If you are caught, you could fail the course, be expelled, and gain a bad reputation with your teachers and peers.
- When you are hired by future employers based on the idea that you received good grades in a certain subject, you will not be able to solve problems, offer ideas, or maintain the workload in that subject area. A teen is only cheating themselves out of learning and discovering how good they could really do.
- Experts agree that:
 - students who repeatedly plagiarize Internet content lose their ability to think critically and to distinguish legitimate sources from those that are not.
 - students who cheat in high school are more likely to do the same in college, and college cheaters, in turn, are more likely to behave dishonestly on the job.

Complicating matters is that schools are sometimes reluctant to bring cheaters to justice for two main reasons. First, accusing a student usually results in very angry

parents and sometimes lawsuits. Second, the federal government's No Child Left Behind policy penalizes schools whose students perform poorly on standardized tests by forcing them to close or replace staff.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

- Determine prevalence of cheating in Kenya's schools
- Establish what the impact has been
- Analyze what the 2013 research on cheating reveals on why students cheat
- Find out measures that have been taken at the national and school level to address cheating in exams
- Assess if the measures are working and what else could be done to prevent exam cheating

2. Methodology

Methodology here is used to mean particular procedures or set of procedures or rules that systematically guide a study. Therefore, this sub-section describes the procedures that the study employed to elicit data on evaluation of Exam Cheating state in Kenyan Schools

Specifically, the section describes the research design, the study area, sources of data and the methods of analysis used. The study area was the Republic of Kenya which is a country in Eastern Africa, with a population of approximately 41.61 million people. It lies on the equator and is bordered by Ethiopia (North), Somalia (East), Tanzania (South), Uganda (West), and Sudan (Northwest), with the Indian Ocean running along the southeast border. It has an extension of 582,646 sq. km. The country is named after Mount Kenya - before 1920, the area now known as Kenya was known as the British East Africa Protectorate before the introduction of education. Kenya is a diverse nation of 42 distinct ethnic groups. Official languages are Swahili and English and the currency is Kenyan Shilling.

The study utilized document analysis procedure which is a form of qualitative research in which documents were interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning, thought and opinions, and dived deeper into the state of exam cheating in Kenyan schools. The main documents from where data were collected from were government policy papers, online desk research, published articles, government published data, news prints, data from examinations council and review of the primary data used to check the correctness of primary research on cheating in exams in Masaba South of 2013. The data collected covered the period from 2013 and 2018 since the primary study was carried out was in 2013 so the study was able to evaluate the changes that have taken place as Kenya has been on the spot over cheating in exams lately.

To analyze the collected data the researcher, coded content in themes such as prevalence of cheating, impact of cheating, research revelations on why students cheat, measures that have been taken at the national and school level to address cheating in exams and assess if the measures are working and what else could be done to prevent exam cheating

3. Findings

3.1. How Prevalent Is Cheating in Kenya's Schools

Although, cheating behavior in educational settings is not new, its prevalence according to Maina [6] seems to have risen significantly over the past 30 years. Exam cheating involves low-end activities such as prying over the shoulder to steal a colleague answer to high end activities that include selling exam and marking scripts. Consequently, it has turned out to be extremely difficult to assess cheating prevalence rates in schools, though researchers believe it is popular [7].

Estimating, prevalence has proved difficult, especially due to lack of comprehensive data and that whatever data is available relates mainly the high-end cheating behavior. For example, a research study conducted in the US revealed that up to 86% of college students admitted having cheated at one time or another in their educational career [8]. In contrast, the number of Kenyan students caught cheating (high-end) and punished by the examination body is less than 1%; the highest relates to results for the 2015 KCSE. This simply implies that thousands who cheat and are not caught due to sophistication in cheating behavior may be quite many. This view agrees with self-reported evidence, like that deduced by McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino [8] after surveying more than 71,300 undergraduates and 17,000 graduate students. McCabe, a longtime researcher and leader in the Center for Academic Integrity, estimated that the percentage of higher education students who cheat at some point during their academic career—using crib notes, copying answers from another's paper, and/or helping someone else with answers on a test—to be at about 68 percent for undergraduate and 43 percent for graduate students.

3.2. What Has the Impact Been?

Although, national examinations are set, manned, transported to examination centres, administered, supervised and invigilated, marked and released by people who have been identified by Kenya National Examination Council [9], yet examination cheating still goes on unabated. Not many students realize the impact of cheating in exams. When caught or suspected of cheating, whether it is the entire school or a few isolated students, the consequences have been disastrous. For example, depending on the assessed severity, cheating can lead to a jail term in addition to cancellation and withholding of exam results; KNEC refused to rank the school, to release individual students' results, or take any other disciplinary action in accordance with the requirements of the examinations act [10].

However, due to examination management inefficiencies, most reported exam cheating cases have gone unpunished, giving exam cheating a chance to thrive. Failure to eradicate exam cheating is akin to rewarding mediocrity and creating a society that does not value honesty and hard work. What is more, we disenfranchise highly deserving and morally upright students, so as to admit cheats ending up producing for the market dishonest professionals bent

on all manner of vices. Imagine trusting your life to failures and cheats!

3.3. What Does Your Research Reveal about Why Students Cheat?

In the research conducted in secondary schools in Masaba south, Kisii County that focused on why students cheat in national examinations revealed thus.

The research revealed as in Table 1 that exam cheating is influenced by several factors; each accounting variously. Some of the major ones include poor preparations for examinations (32%); pressure from parents, teachers, peers and society at large to produce good grades (21.6%); stiff competition for better grades to enable one to be admitted to the next level of schooling (13.8%); poor invigilation of examinations by some invigilators not being keen while others sleep through the examination period which provides an opportunity for students to cheat (9.6%); lack of essential facilities such as libraries and laboratories (8.7%). This means that students lack enough books or adequate exposure to science practical, hence contributing to their being ill-preparedness for examinations and therefore increasing the tendency to cheat in examinations. Lastly anxiety builds-up due to lack confidence in tackling examinations (7.5%). Some of the students suffer from inferiority complex and do not feel adequately prepared to handle examinations and finally resort to cheating in the examinations [11].

Kassim [12] notes that promoting cheats and incompetent people to institutions is just rewarding and promoting exam irregularity in institutions of higher learning. These students go to these institutions and are placed in employment. Since for them there is nothing wrong in cheating, they engage in corruption, loot public funds, and work tirelessly to ensure they are not caught.

Kassim [12] continues to note that highly deserving and morally upright students are left out of the institutions of higher learning because they did not perform as well as those who cheated in exams. Finally, employees are unable to trust students coming from institutions of higher learning because of their inability to think critically and perform. They are forced to employ their relatives whose background they at least have an idea about. In the process,

we suffer as a country because of nepotism. The education system has become a mockery of national values of honesty, transparency, integrity and accountability as envisaged under article 10 of the Constitution of Kenya.

No doubt, exam-cheating undermines years of hard work and sacrifice put in by parents, teachers and students. Cheating kills the wonderful spirit of competition and undermines the trust in merit.

3.3. What Measures Have Been Taken at the National and School Level to Address It?

Examinations in Kenya are governed by rules and regulations set under an Act of parliament. The Act provides stiff penalties that include a jail term not exceeding ten years or two million Kenya shillings or both for accessing examination materials and revealing their contents knowingly; impersonators are liable to a jail term not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding two million shillings and where students are caught cheating, they are arraigned in a court of law to answer charges [13]. Further, the ministry has taken administrative measure to curb the vice such as banning social activities during the third term that include prayer days, visiting, half term breaks, sports, prize-giving ceremonies and annual general meetings — to cut contact between candidates and outsiders [14]. Likewise, the ministry shortened the period for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exams from six weeks to four and put head teachers directly in charge of the tests in their respective schools. This is aimed at curbing exam cheating to ensure that there is fairness in the conducting of national examinations [15].

Standard daily newspaper of May 2016 on exams, the cabinet minister for education retaliated that there is No doubt, that exam-cheating undermines years of hard work and sacrifice put in by parents, teachers and students. Cheating kills the wonderful spirit of competition and undermines the trust in merit.

Wanzala [16] noted that head teachers will be the only ones allowed to have a mobile phone during the examination period as a way of curbing exam cheating which is done by collaboration by supervisors, invigilators and security officers.

Table 1. Factors Contributing to Cheating in Examinations

| Variables | Form Two | | | | Form Three | | | | Total | |
|------------------------|----------|-------|---------|-------|------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Males | | Females | | Males | | Females | | Freq. | % |
| | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % | Freq. | % |
| Inadequate preparation | 30 | 6.68 | 40 | 8.91 | 34 | 7.57 | 41 | 27.39 | 145 | 32.29 |
| Performance pressure | 25 | 5.57 | 20 | 4.46 | 25 | 5.57 | 25 | 5.57 | 95 | 21.16 |
| Stiff Competition | 14 | 3.12 | 10 | 2.23 | 20 | 4.46 | 18 | 2.03 | 62 | 13.81 |
| Poor Invigilation | 10 | 2.23 | 10 | 2.23 | 12 | 2.67 | 11 | 2.45 | 43 | 9.58 |
| Lack of facilities | 10 | 2.23 | 9 | 2.00 | 10 | 2.23 | 10 | 2.23 | 39 | 8.69 |
| Anxiety | 5 | 1.11 | 10 | 2.23 | 7 | 1.56 | 12 | 1.56 | 34 | 7.57 |
| No response | 7 | 1.56 | 8 | 1.7 | 9 | 2.00 | 7 | 2.00 | 31 | 6.90 |
| Total | 101 | 23.17 | 107 | 24.29 | 117 | 27.39 | 124 | 27.39 | 449 | 100 |

Source: Nyamwange [9].

Listmann [17] asserts that building trust with students is key in curbing exam cheating this can be done building a relationship with students so they don't want to disappoint or get in trouble with the teachers. Some ways to build trust include being fair when grading, not having overly high expectations, and explaining your reasons for grades and class content. If teachers express their desire to build a relationship of trust with students, and then support them and trust them in return, they are less likely to cheat. Part of building trust with students is showing them that you care about them. They are less likely to break rules if they know that you are looking after their best interests and have invested in their success. It is important that teachers emphasize honesty with in addition to talking about it with students. Discussing expectations and methods of avoiding cheating with students and parents can help drive the message home to their children as this will be especially helpful for students who have very involved parents [17].

3.4. Are They Working? What Else Could be Done to Prevent It?

Although, it may be too early to assess the effectiveness of the new rules, it has been observed that frequent education rules face substantial system and systemic failures. Consequently, more research needs to be done to come up with innovative measures to curb cheating. Some of the ways may include:

- Set up an Internet firewall to prevent students exchanging e-mail and instant messages that might contain exam questions or answers.
- Require students to submit their papers to a plagiarism check and establish specific penalties for those caught to have plagiarized or cheated in exams.
- Create a school honor code that recognizes ethical behavior and defines academic misconduct.
- Parents to help their children inculcate ethical behavior by being honest and avoiding cheating that will hurt them in the long term
- Parents to encourage rather than exerting too much pressure on their children to succeed at school. Ambition is fine, but honesty and integrity are more important than any academic success achieved through deceit.
- Parents to stay involved in their teen's academic life by reviewing their homework and reading their essays
- School administrators should develop an honor code; create ways for kids to identify cheaters

anonymously, and have teachers develop multiple versions of tests to deter students from sharing answers via text messaging.

4. Recommendations

- Schools and parents must both actively discourage cheating if we have any hope of stopping this epidemic.
- The government and the Kenya examinations council must continue to keep their word in dealing sternly with the culprits of exam cheating.

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