

## EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the influence of examination malpractice prevalence (EMP), agents' involvement in examination malpractice (AIEM), methods of minimising examination malpractice, students' willingness to engage in examination malpractice and examination quality assurance efforts (EQAE) on Examination Quality Assurance (EQA) of senior secondary school certificate examination (SSSCE) conducted by the National Examinations Council (NECO) in Oyo state, Nigeria. Survey design was adopted, while cluster technique was used in selecting 600 NECO candidates, 60 supervisors, 60 invigilators and 100 NECO staff. Six validated scales were used to collect data. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance. The EQAE ( $\beta=.059$ ) had significant influence on EQA while EMP and AIEM did not. The independent variables ( $F(3; 219)=1.759$ ;  $R^2=0.024$ ) jointly predicted the EQA of NECO SSSCE and contributed 2.4% of the variations in the dependent variable. The National Examinations Council should strengthen its methods of minimising examination malpractice.*

### Introduction

Every educational programme is identified with measurable and achievable objectives. The search for a measure of students' achievement has led to the adoption of examination among other measures. Examination, therefore, is the series of questions presented to examinees in order to determine their mastery of the curriculum content or ability to exhibit certain behaviour. Although, several people have contested the veracity of examination in establishing the examinees' true capabilities as evidence abound negating examination as a true yardstick of measurement. However, examination becomes a tool adopted in determining the level of students' ability. Candidates who demonstrated high academic ability are given preference above those

with low ability, while the latter would want the same preferential treatment and in the bid to meet their desire they engaged in examination malpractices.

Examination malpractice is one of the vices troubling educational system in Nigeria today with no end in sight. In order to stem it, processes of examination quality assurance must be ensured to bring about assessment outcome that will stand test validity wherever such certificates are presented.

Gesinde (2002) underscored the importance of examination as follows: whatever result that is obtained from the examination is used to make a number of decisive decisions which include selection of career/vocation, promotion or demotion of students, determination of exceptional learners, and selection of students to be offered admission among others. Therefore, having accepted that examination remains the major yardstick by which the system is controlled and feedback made available to stakeholders, this basis by which certificates are awarded and candidates are classified by ability should never be compromised. Then, the quality assurance of processes of examination administration will determine the quality of certificates that will be given to the examinees. Due to the fact that vital decisions would be taken based on the outcome of the test, it implies that the quality assurance should be stridently adhered to without any form of compromise in all the processes of the test administration.

Nwakwo (2012) cited in Paul et al (2013) painted the state of examination malpractices thus to xray the level of degeneration in the quality of Nigerian certificates. The following questions were put forward: Is there still need of studying in this country? Attending school nowadays, is it still crucial? Reading and studying hard in order to pass one's exams, are they still possible in this country? Being anxious about one's examinations, is it still prevailing among the students of this country? Our youths are no longer studying their books because miracles are happening in their various examination halls. Occurrence of examination malpractice is on the increase in many of Nigerian schools and has become a serious problem plaguing educational system in the country. This scenario will continue to produce students with distinction grades in the SSCE, First Class honours in the universities without a single knowledge in any definite subject or

course and teachers, who would not be able to spell the names of their schools correctly if quality assurance of test administration is compromised.

Consequently, the recurring issue of compromise in quality assurance in test administration in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) led to the setting up of a judicial commission of enquiry in 1978 headed by Justice Sogbetun which appraised the state of affairs of the West African Examinations Council in relation to the problems of efficient conduct of examinations and prompt release of results. The Commission acknowledged the excessive workload of WAEC and recommended reduction of its workload by establishing other examination bodies to take over some of its examinations (Anzene, 2014). The climax of an evolutionary process was the establishment of National Examinations Council (NECO) after constitution of several panels. The Abdulsalam Abubakar administration in April, 1999 established NECO to assuage the outcry against WAEC linkages and inefficiency. The creation of NECO was only the climax of a process that spanned over twenty years. It started with the widespread leakage of West African School Certificate examination questions in 1977, thus NECO which is today, one of the public examination bodies in Nigeria was established to solve problems identified by the federal government commission of enquiry, panel and committee (NECO Factbook). Since its establishment, NECO has tried to design mechanism to bring about quality assurance in the conduct of her examinations, but this is not to say that these vices and inefficiencies have been holistically eliminated going by the reports awash both the print and electronic media daily and feedback from educational stakeholders.

Meanwhile, achieving quality assurance in examination management is dependent on several variables ranging from the quality of the assessment instruments to the test administration processes and post examination activities. The standard procedures designed and adopted for the development of assessment instrument have a lot of built-in checks which ensure that tests are reliable and valid. Despite these efforts, saboteurs/agents of examination malpractices are devising means of circumventing the rules and regulation governing the conduct of the examination. However, if the test administration stages of an assessment system is not properly handled, the assessment outcome could be distorted (Areghan et al, 2013). This unending and

growing trend may be owing to the sophistication of these agents of examination malpractices who are working daily to devise means of thwarting quality test administration through unethical means. In fact, computer or electronic aided malpractices are reportedly said to be on the rise to attest to the advancement of invention of these agents.

Examination malpractice has become a topical issue in the globe and Nigeria in particular due to its prevalent nature. Indeed, different works like (Nwakwo, 2012 cited in Paul et al, 2013; Count, 2011; Isa, 2006; Balogun, 1999) have dealt not only with the nature and causes, but also the effects of examination malpractice, both in the school environment and public examinations. However, examination malpractice has moved from the sidelines to the front burner of national discourse. It now resonates across the geographical landscape of Nigeria. The print and electronic media are often awash with stories of sordid and hard-to-believe tales of examination malpractice in public examinations (Ndifon and Ndifon, 2012). Evidence abounds that several holders of Senior Secondary School Certificate can not justify their grades with their ability. The depth of malpractice in public examinations in Nigeria is perplexing to say the obvious. This was corroborated by Onyechere (2004) that it is almost a routine for students to cheat in both internal and external examinations. What makes the matter intractable is the role played by adult agents or collaborators. Among them are teachers, school principals, higher institution students, touts or mercenaries who invade centers to make quick money. Parents are often the provider of fund for examination malpractice. There are also special coaching schools or centers which aid and abet examination malpractice for popularity and profit.

Examination malpractice continues to grow at all levels of the educational system. It has proved to be an incurable disease in the educational system making nonsense of the educational quality. There is a great need for the concerned government institutions to look for a permanent solution in this century if the education sector will be the driver of national development and if Nigerian certificates are going to be respected in this era of globalization. In emphasizing the seriousness of cheating in examinations and its implications for professionalism, Denga (2004) opines that if a medical doctor makes a mistake, the patient dies, if an engineer makes a mistake, the

bridge collapses, but if a teacher makes a mistake, it affects the unborn generation, showing that while the mistake of the medical doctor and the engineer have immediate repercussions, that of the teacher is eternal. This accounts for the deficient system as no nation can rise above its teaching force. It was this compromised system that bred the teachers who are in control of the system today, so the feedback we are getting is justified. Therefore, lasting solution to examination malpractice needs to appraise the level of compliance of quality assurance in test examination administration.

The NECO, in order to achieve quality assurance, put in place procedures that cut across pre-examination, examination period and post-examination activities. Pre-examination activities were setting of minimum benchmark in terms of infrastructure and personnel, accreditation and re-accreditation of schools in every five years, item generation, recruitment of public school teachers as supervisors and coding of answer scripts. Examination period activities were distribution of test papers, supervision, invigilation, monitoring and packaging. Post-examination activities that are important for the attainment of test quality were marking and vetting of scripts, detection and collation of malpractices, scrutiny of centres, checking for correctness of addition and omission, filling of examiner mark sheet (EMS), scanning of EMS, release and cancellation of results.

If any personnel saddled with the responsibility of executing any of the examination related tasks is lacking in integrity, the quality of the examination administration is not assured and the test outcome is rendered invalid. It is not impossible that some agents could be aiding and abetting examination malpractices in public examinations. This has made quality assurance of examination administration unachievable. However, despite all the quality assurance measures that have been employed or deployed to eradicate incidence of malpractices in public examinations, a number cases are often reported. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of examination malpractice on quality assurance of the NECO SSSCE in Oyo state, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent time, achieving quality assurance in test administration in SSSCE has become a major concern to all relevant stakeholders as examination malpractice remains a social phenomenon that distorts the quality assurance in test administration. It seems to have become so pervasive that it cuts across all various strata of test administration and has also assumed a frightening dimension. Pre-examination activities such as school accreditation, test production, safeguarding and distribution of test materials sometimes enhance malpractices. There were reports of schools without the minimum benchmark conniving with accreditation and ministry of education officials to get approval despite that the required facilities are non-existent, thus compromising quality process of examination administration at the pre-examination stage. Cases of question leakages at printing points also abound. The next phase of examination is reported to be grossly characterised by malpractices as personnels saddled with different responsibilities such as supervision, invigilation, distribution, monitoring and security allow themselves to be used for pecuniary gains. This has also reportedly crept into post-examination activities. In the process of transporting candidates' scripts for packaging and marking, there are reported cases whereby agents of examination malpractice continue to perpetrate the act through collusion with the officials entrusted with the task and thus making the quality of public examination administration a nightmare. As a result, this study examined the influence of examination malpractice on the quality assurance of NECO SSSCE in Oyo state, Nigeria.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were raised for statistical analysis:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>: There was no significant relationship between quality assurance efforts and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination in Oyo state.
- Ho<sub>2</sub>: There was no significant relationship between prevalence of examination malpractice and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination in Oyo state.
- Ho<sub>3</sub>: There was no significant relationship between agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination in Oyo state.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There was no significant composite and relative contribution of prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractices and quality assurance efforts to quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination in Oyo state.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the survey design of the ex-post-facto type to appraise the opinion of people without any manipulation. In essence, there was no direct control over the variables in this study because their manifestation has already occurred. The descriptive research design helps to describe events as they existed.

The population of this study comprises students who have written senior secondary school certificate examination, NECO staff, supervisors and invigilators. The population comprises students who sat for the May/June 2015 senior secondary school certificate examination in Oyo state, the 126 regular and other set of ad-hoc staff of NECO in Oyo state. The ad-hoc staff were NECO supervisors (public secondary school teachers saddled with the responsibility of handling question papers and other examination materials from custodian points through conduct of examination in schools), invigilators assisting supervisors in various schools and examination monitors.

Multi-stage sampling frame was adopted for the study. Cluster method was used to select 12 schools (one from each custodian point) across the three senatorial districts. The respondents were 600 randomly selected students, 120 NECO examination supervisors and invigilators from the schools and 100 employees of NECO in Oyo state, who participated at various stages of examination administration, purposively selected to generate relevant information. These schools were selected from twelve 12 NECO while one hundred.

The NECO staff, supervisors and invigilators (NSSIQ) and NECO SSSCE candidates (NSSSCECQ) were used to collect data. The NSSIQ has six sections (A to F). Section A of the NSSIQ contains demographic information about the respondents, such as gender, qualification,

examination job status, name of school and town. Sections B to F of the instrument contain different rating scales: Excellent, very good, good and fair were options used for section B; most times, very often, once in a while and not at all were used for section C; very high, high, low and very low were used for section D; most effective, effective, fairly effective and not effective were used for sections E and F.

The data was analyzed with the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Simple percentage and mean were used for research questions while Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and regression analyses were used to test hypotheses.

### **Results and Discussion**

The quality of NECO senior school certificate examination ( $2.77 \pm 0.37$ ) was very good. The quality of test items ( $2.57 \pm 0.81$ ); the conduct of custodian officers in assuring quality ( $3.13 \pm 0.78$ ); services of monitoring officers during NECO examinations ( $3.0 \pm 0.84$ ); NECO system of marking ( $2.68 \pm 0.19$ ) were all very good while the quality of supervision during NECO SSSCE ( $2.47 \pm 0.87$ ) was good (Table 4.2.1). However, there is still much room for improvement. NECO SSSCE quality was not adjudged excellent in any of the items.

**Table 4.2.1: Quality status of National Examinations Council**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>REMARK</b>
1	Quality of test items on NECO SSSCE are	220	2.57	0.81	Very good
2	The quality of supervision during NECO examinations is	220	2.48	0.87	Good
3	The conduct of custodian officers in assuring quality is	220	3.13	0.78	Very good
4	Services of monitoring officers during NECO examinations are	220	3.0	0.84	Very good
5	NECO system of marking is	220	2.68	0.19	Very good
	<b>Average</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>Very good</b>



Examination malpractice in NECO SSSCE ( $1.45 \pm 0.33$ ) occurred once in a while. The prevalence of examination malpractice in terms of test materials leakage at printing points ( $1.59 \pm 0.79$ ); NECO custodian officers connive with other agents to perpetrate examination malpractices ( $1.21 \pm 0.51$ ); NECO distributors engage in acts of examination malpractices ( $1.34 \pm 0.54$ ); teachers/Invigilators allow candidates to engage in examination malpractices ( $1.61 \pm 0.75$ ); security personnel (NSCDC officers) do connive with others to allow examination malpractices ( $1.43 \pm 0.69$ ); sitting arrangement at examination venues encourage candidates to cheat ( $1.29 \pm 0.58$ ) and candidates do cheat at NECO examination ( $1.72 \pm 0.58$ ) all occurred once in a while (Table 4.2.1).

**Table 4.2.2: Prevalence of Examination Malpractices**

S/N	ITEMS	N	X	SD	REMARK
1	Test materials leak at printing points	220	1.59	0.79	Once in a while
2	NECO custodian officers connive with other agents to perpetrate examination malpractices	220	1.21	0.51	Once in a while
3	NECO distributors engage in acts of examination malpractices	220	1.34	0.54	Once in a while
4	Teachers/Invigilators allow candidates to engage in examination malpractices	220	1.61	0.75	Once in a while
5	Security personnel (NSCDC officers) do connive with other agents to allow examination malpractices	220	1.43	0.67	Once in a while
6	Sitting arrangement at examination venues encourage candidates to cheat	220	1.29	0.58	Once in a while
7	Candidates cheat at NECO examination	220	1.72	1.08	Once in a while
	Average	220	1.45	0.33	Once in a while

The level of involvement of agents in examination malpractice ( $1.42 \pm 0.30$ ) was low. The results showed that the level of involvement of NECO supervisors in examination malpractices ( $1.24 \pm 0.58$ ); NECO invigilators in examination malpractice ( $1.23 \pm 0.54$ ); complicity of

security personnel in aiding examination malpractice ( $1.33 \pm 0.71$ ); mercenaries' involvement in examination malpractices ( $1.40 \pm 0.72$ ); NECO staff in examination malpractice ( $1.43 \pm 0.75$ ); school/ centre authorities in examination malpractices ( $1.23 \pm 0.61$ ); ministry of education officials aided examination malpractices ( $1.01 \pm 0.09$ ) were low. The results also showed that parents' involvement in examination malpractice ( $2.47 \pm 1.13$ ) was high. This has therefore shown that parents were the most culpable agent aiding students to engage in examination malpractice (Table 4.2.3).

**Table 4.2.3: Agents' Involvement in Examination Malpractice**

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1	The extent to which NECO supervisors engage in examination malpractices is	220	1.24	0.58	Low
2	The extent to which NECO invigilators engage in examination malpractices is	220	1.23	0.54	Low
3	The level of complicity of security personnel in aiding examination malpractices is	220	1.33	0.71	Low
4	The extent to which mercenaries involve in examination malpractices is	220	1.40	0.72	Low
5	The degree of involvement of NECO staff in examination malpractices is	220	1.43	0.75	Low
6	The extent to which school/centre authorities contribute to exam malpractices is	220	1.23	0.61	Low
7	The level of parents' involvement in examination malpractices is	220	2.47	1.13	High
8	The extent to which ministry of education officials aid examination malpractices is	220	1.01	0.09	Low
	<b>Average</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>Low</b>

**Research Question 4:** What is the effectiveness of quality assurance efforts of NECO in controlling examination malpractices?

**Table 4.2.4: NECO Quality Assurance efforts in controlling Examination Malpractices**

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1	Recruitment of public school Teachers for supervision to enhance integrity is	220	3.67	0.69	Very Effective
2	Coding of scripts to check examination malpractices is	220	3.05	0.65	Effective
3	Printing of alternative question papers in the event of examination leakages is	220	3.44	2.81	Very Effective
4	Usage of e-photo album by monitoring officers to check examination impersonation is	220	3.34	0.56	Very Effective
5	Capturing of fingerprint to prevent impersonation of candidate is	220	3.57	0.65	Very Effective
6	Swapping of scripts from one state to another state for marking is	220	2.82	0.92	Effective
7	Candidates seating 30 minutes before the commencement of examination is	220	2.75	0.63	Effective
	<b>Average</b>	220	3.24	0.56	Very Effective

The NECO Quality Assurance efforts in controlling examination malpractice ( $3.24 \pm 0.56$ ) were very effective. Recruitment of public school teachers for supervision ( $3.67 \pm 0.69$ ) was very effective. Coding of scripts to check examination malpractice ( $3.05 \pm 0.65$ ) was effective. Printing of alternative question papers in the event of examination leakages ( $3.44 \pm 2.81$ ) was very effective. Usage of e-photo album by monitoring officers to check examination impersonation ( $3.34 \pm 0.56$ ) and capturing of fingerprint to prevent impersonation of candidate ( $3.57 \pm 0.65$ ) were very effective. Swapping of scripts from one state to another state for marking ( $2.82 \pm 0.92$ ) was effective and candidates seating 30 minutes before the commencement of

examination ( $2.75 \pm 0.63$ ) were effective. The results showed that items 2, 6 and 7 can be improved as they only showed effectiveness. They can therefore be made very effective through quality assurance efforts of NECO management (Table 4.2.4).

**Table 4.2.5: Methods/Strategies of Minimizing Examination Malpractice**

S/N	ITEMS	N	X	SD	REMARK
1	Public campaign against examination malpractice	220	3.34	0.72	Very Effective
2	Sanctioning of schools who engaged in examination malpractice	220	2.52	0.84	Effective
3	Sanctioning of candidates who engaged in examination malpractice	220	2.94	0.90	Effective
4	Appointment and training of supervisors and invigilators from one educational district to another	220	3.13	0.91	Very Effective
5	Commendation for well-behaved and examination malpractice-free schools	220	2.70	0.89	Effective
6	Computer-based test(CBT)	220	2.84	0.85	Effective
7	Provision of counseling services in secondary schools	220	3.58	0.57	Very Effective
8	Sanctioning of examination personnel for connivance	220	3.52	0.60	Effective
9	Mopping of unused examination materials from field	220	3.33	0.57	Effective
10	Increment in supervisors and invigilators' allowance	220	2.94	0.73	Effective
	<b>Average</b>	220	3.34	0.72	Very Effective

The methods/strategies of minimizing examination malpractice ( $3.34 \pm 0.72$ ) adopted by the NECO were very effective. The items were rated in the following order: establishment of effective guidance and counseling in secondary schools ( $3.58 \pm 0.57$ ); sanctioning of

examination personnel for connivance ( $3.52 \pm 0.84$ ); public campaign against examination malpractice ( $3.34 \pm 0.72$ ) were very effective. Mopping of unused examination materials from field ( $3.33 \pm 0.57$ ); appointment and training of supervisors and invigilators from one educational district to another ( $3.13 \pm 0.91$ ); Increment in supervisors and invigilators' allowance ( $2.94 \pm 0.73$ ); sanctioning of candidates who engaged in examination malpractice ( $2.94 \pm 0.90$ ); computer-based test ( $2.84 \pm 0.85$ ); commendation for well-behaved and examination malpractice-free school ( $2.70 \pm 0.89$ ); sanctioning of schools who engaged in examination malpractice ( $2.52 \pm 0.84$ ) were effective. Provision of counseling service in secondary schools; and sanctioning of examination personnel for connivance and Public campaign were the most effective methods/strategies of minimising examination malpractice (Table 4.2.5).

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between quality assurance efforts and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination.

Table 4.3.1: Test of relationship between quality assurance efforts and quality of NECO Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination

Variable	N	MEAN	SD	R	P	REMARK
Quality Assurance efforts	220	22.55	4.22	0.080	0.389	Not
Quality Assurance of NECO SSSCE	220	13.87	1.87			Significant

A weak, positive but insignificant relationship existed between Quality Assurance efforts and the Quality of NECO SSSCE. This implies that quality assurance efforts had no significant relationship with the quality assurance of the NECO senior school certificate examination.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between prevalence of examination malpractice and quality assurance of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination.

**Table 4.3.2: Test of relationship between prevalence of examination malpractice and quality assurance of NECO Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination**

Variable	N	MEAN	SD	R	P	RANK
Prevalence of examination malpractice	220	10.18	2.31	-0.952	0.342	Not Significant
Quality Assurance of NECO SSSCE	220	13.87	1.87			

Prevalence of examination malpractice (-0.952) did not have significant relationship with quality assurance of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality assurance of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination.

**Table 4.3.3: Test of relationship between agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination**

Variable	N	MEAN	SD	R	P	REMARK
Agents involvement	220	11.35	2.39	-1.556	0.121	Not Significant
Quality Assurance of NECO SSSCE	220	13.87	1.87			

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was calculated to know the relationship between agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. The results showed a negative linear relationship ( $r = -1.556$ ) between the variables at  $p > 0.05$ . This implies that agent's involvement in examination malpractice had not influenced quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. It means that in order to improve the quality of NECO SSSCE, there is still a need to stem the activities of the agents of the examination malpractice. From the results of the analysis, the null hypothesis should be accepted.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no significant composite and relative contribution of prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractices and quality assurance efforts to quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination.

**TABLE 4.3.4: Summary of regression analysis showing the composite contribution of prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality assurance efforts**

<b>Model Summary</b>					
R	.156				
R Square	.024				
Adjusted R Square	.010				
Std. Error of the Estimate	1.859				
Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	18.244	3	6.081	1.759	.156 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	756.985	219	3.457		
Total	775.229	222			

From the table 4.3.4, the three variables namely: prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractices and quality assurance efforts taken together jointly correlate positively ( $R = .156$ ) with quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. This implies that the three factors have a positive multiple relationships with quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examinations. Hence, they have the potential of explaining quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. Also the three variables could explain 2.4% of total variance of quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination ( $R^2 = .024$ ). This leaves the remaining 97.6% to other factors that were not considered in the study and the error (chance). The level of significance of the joint contribution of all independent variables was presented in the ANOVA table, the table shows that R value of .156 is not significant ( $F = 1.759, P > 0.05$ ). This implies that the three variables did not make significant contribution to quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination.

**TABLE 4.3.5: Summary of regression analysis showing the relative contribution of prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality assurance efforts**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	14.757	1.106		13.342	.000
Examination Malpractice Prevalence	-.053	.055	-.065	-.952	.342
Agents' involvement in malpractice	-.083	.053	-.106	-1.556	.121
NECO Quality Assurance Efforts	.26	.030	.059	.864	.389

Dependent Variable: Examination quality assurance

The Table 4.3.5 shows that among all the independent variables, quality assurance efforts made the highest contribution to examination quality ( $\beta = .059$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) which was not significant. It is followed by Agents' involvement in malpractice with coefficient ( $\beta = -.106$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) which was not significant, and lastly examination prevalence ( $\beta = -.065$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) which was also not significant. Therefore, it could be inferred that all the independent variables do not contribute significantly to examination quality. Hence, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relative contribution of prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality assurance efforts to examination quality was accepted.

## Discussion

The table 4.3.1 showed the relationship between quality assurance efforts and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination in Oyo state. The results showed a weak and



positive linear relationship ( $r = 0.080$ ) between the variables at  $p > 0.05$  which was not significant. This is not in agreement with the findings of Uwadiae and Adelokun (2007) that quality assurance is a fundamental tool for building institutional reputation in multicultural contexts and an indispensable foundation to protect the integrity of the assessment system. This is also not in line with the findings of Ugodulunwa (2003) that developing instruments, administration and scoring of instruments, operating continuous assessment, utilizing assessment feedback for instructional improvement, reporting students' achievement to parents and other stakeholders, keeping continuous assessment records, diagnosing students' learning difficulties, and initiating remedial activities, appropriate implementation of the guidelines and adoption of the identified strategies will make quality to be assured. This implies that an examination body reputation of providing quality service can only be guaranteed through strong quality assurance efforts.

More so, table 4.3.2 showed the relationship between prevalence of examination malpractice and quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. The results showed a negative linear relationship ( $r = -0.952$ ) between the variables at  $p > 0.05$  which was not significant. This is not in agreement with the findings of Ogbaji and Aliawuya (2004) that the situation in the secondary level of our education has become a recurring decimal such that hardly a year passes without bodies like the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) being faced with the dilemma of coping with various aspects of examination fraud. The result of the findings is also not in line with the findings of Anzene (2014) that examination malpractice from its low intensity grew to become more pronounced, involving persons other than the candidates. Since then examination malpractice became more advanced and sophisticated. It means that in order to improve more of quality of NECO SSSCE, there is still a need to reduce the prevalence of examination malpractice completely.

Negative linear relationship ( $r = -1.556$ ) between agent's involvement in examination malpractice and quality assurance of NECO SSSCE at  $p > 0.05$  which was not significant. The result of the present findings therefore attest to the result of the June/July 2015 examination announced by NECO, in which 0.11 per cent of 969,491 candidates were caught involved in examination malpractices. These were a little above 1000 cases. The results of the candidates involved were

cancelled, while the affected schools were blacklisted. This showed that the activities of the agents of examination malpractices have been reduced. Although, this is not in agreement with the findings of Ijaiya (2004) that there exists a strong link to examination malpractice and its agents in reducing the quality of certificate, the previous study's findings were at variance with the result of the present findings, this may be as a result of difference in location, methodology and variables considered in the previous studies. It may also mean that the quality assurance efforts of NECO in assuring quality in the conduct of its SSSCE were high.

Prevalence of examination malpractice, agent's involvement in examination malpractices and quality assurance efforts taken together jointly correlate positively ( $R = .156$ ) with quality assurance of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. This implies that three factors have a positive multiple relationships with quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examinations. Hence, they have the potential of explaining quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination. Also the three variables could explain 2.4% of total variance of quality of NECO senior secondary school certificate examination ( $R^2 = .024$ ). This leaves the remaining 97.6% to other factors that were not considered in the study and the error (chance).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings and observation made during this study, the following conclusions were made;

- Quality assurance in all the processes of the test administration is required to ensure quality of examination that will be acceptable in terms of predictive validity to all educational stakeholders.
- Agents' involvement in examination malpractice has reduced considerably, but it was discovered that new methods such as computer aided means of cheating is on the rise.
- The unattractive remuneration of the supervisors and invigilators is serving as a catalyst for them to be bribed by the centre/school authorities.
- External monitoring of examination by academics and personnel from state ministry of education is pivotal to ensuring quality assurance.

- The quality assurance efforts of NECO needs to be improved based on the reviewed literature linking its emergence to solve certain inefficiencies which are still prevalent in examination administration in Nigeria till date.
- The place of quality assurance in the delivery of public examinations in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. NECO must ensure that quality assurance is given a deserved priority. The frameworks for ensuring quality assurance should be strengthened through the development of new performance indicators, benchmarking processes and established reference points for quality, output standard and criteria that focus on candidates' performance.
- NECO does not have to be reactive to public scrutiny, but must be proactive, productive, innovative and creative in its service delivery.
- Quality assurance measures must be embedded in all facets of the activities and operations of NECO.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- NECO needs to conduct post examination auditing periodically to review its activities.
- Government should establish a quality assurance bureau through federal ministry of education that will monitor the activities of NECO.
- Periodic evaluation should be initiated on the activities of NECO using impartial external assessors.
- Functional and effecient in-house quality assurance unit is highly imperative to assure quality of all test administrative procedures.
- Manpower exchange is urgently needed locally and internationally for cross-fertilization of ideas among examination bodies.
- NECO need to place high premium on quality assurance and control in all facets of its operations and service delivery.
- Paucity of funds should be addressed to enable NECO plans its activities ahead of time.
- Civil society organizations should be given a role in test administration to assure quality.

- There is a need for continuous capacity-building to engender globally accepted best practices.
- Lastly, there is a need to intensify efforts on security measure in the school system across the nation to ward-off examination agents around the examination venues.

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