

**AN ETHICAL EVALUATION OF THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF  
EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN ZAMBIA: A CASE STUDY OF  
SELECTED SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT.**

**BY**

**MUNACHONGA MAUREEN**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Applied Ethics.**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA**

**2014**

## **Declaration**

I, Munachonga Maureen, declare that this dissertation:

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## Approval

This dissertation of Munachonga Maureen is approved as fulfilling the partial requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Applied Ethics by the University of Zambia.

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the study was to analyse the causes and effects of examination malpractices on educational standards, the moral character of those involved and socio-economic performance from an ethical perspective. The research was a case study design using the qualitative approach with an ethical component. The study involved five secondary schools from Lusaka, these being Chunga, Matero Girls, Kabulonga Boys, Chelstone and Kamwala Secondary Schools.

Primary data was collected using in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), whereas the secondary data was collected from the literature related to the study, such as books, journals, newspapers and the internet. Those interviewed included guidance and counselling teachers, officials from District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) office and Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), school managers and some parents. Three focus group discussions were conducted in each target school with ten pupils per group. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used. The study had a total sample size of 190 participants. The theories used to guide the collection of relevant data and to ethically evaluate the effects of examination malpractices were, utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics and justice theory.

The research revealed that examination malpractices were a big problem in Lusaka as they tended to virtually destroy the moral integrity of the persons involved. This results in a society with a corrupt and incompetent future workforce. By distorting the very essence of education, society tended to be more at a loss than a gain in terms of socio-economic performance because, most often, the certificates achieved did not reflect the actual capabilities of the holder. Recommendations in tackling examination malpractices therefore call for measures such as the government working with the communities and policy makers to raise public awareness on the importance of the integrity of the examination system, inclusion of morality as a subject at various stages of the curriculum, adequately equipping all public schools with relevant learning/teaching materials and the government putting in an incentive structure for teachers and others involved in the handling of examinations. In conclusion, unless the vice is reversed, and through the faculty of reason seek unrelentingly what is right, as regards conduct in examinations and manner of proceedings, the phenomenon would soon distort the developmental goals of the country. The remedy to the negative effects of examination malpractices, thus, presumably lies in the conceded analysis of its ethical implications so as to build a solid future for education and overall socio-economic development nationwide.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my late father, Timothy H. Munachonga, for all his words of encouragement, and to my baby boy, Matthew, for his never-ending patience and love.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Anthony Musonda, whose critical and penetrating comments and suggestions saw the weaving of this paper into a coherent whole. I found his comments and suggestions extremely helpful. They not only compelled me to clarify my own position and hone some of my arguments but also directed my attention to other aspects of the subject I was dealing with, which I had either neglected or had not given enough treatment to.

I also benefited tremendously from the philosophical discussions I had with fellow students of Applied Ethics. I therefore extend my appreciation to them all.

## **Acronyms**

DEBS.....District Education Board Secretary

ECZ.....Examinations Council of Zambia

EMPs.....Examination Malpractices

FGDs.....Focus Group Discussion

## **FIGURES**

Figure 1 Map of Zambia showing location of Lusaka.

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Figure 4 Chart showing perceived effects of EMPs.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background to the study, the definition of concepts, statement of the problem and the aim of the study. It also presents the research objectives and questions, the theoretical framework, the methodology and methods, the significance of the problem as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study.

### **1.0 Background**

Education is an important instrument that can be used to objectively evaluate and assess students' learning outcomes and ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of different concepts or ideas. Actions and practices that undermine the integrity of the examination process, therefore, pose a serious threat to the quality and credibility of the students' learning outcomes. Examination malpractices are an example of such actions that threaten the integrity of examinations, and/or damage the authority of those responsible for conducting them. Examination malpractices are also a threat to the validity and reliability of the educational system. They are harmful not only to the moral development, but also the intellectual development of learners. Examination malpractices are a serious and growing problem in Zambia. They have become widespread so that there is virtually no examination without incidences of malpractice (Chileshe, 2010).

An examination malpractice is defined as deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules. It places a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage. Factually, it is any illegal act committed by a student single-handedly or in collaboration with others, like fellow pupils, parents, teachers, supervisors or invigilators; before, during or after an examination in order to obtain underserved marks or grades. It is any illegal behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody

charged with the conduct of examinations before, during or after examinations that contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examinations (Lambert, 2003).

If left unchecked, examination malpractices can lead to the incubation of potentially corrupt and incompetent future workforce. Consequently, there is a need for a thorough re-examination of what predisposes us to such unhealthy acts. Only from such a re-examination can we be sure to change the current trends in examination malpractices.

Evidence abounds worldwide of increasing incidents of examination malpractices by learners at primary and secondary schools as well as at colleges. Such malpractices conflict with the core purpose of education which is for the training of mind and character, for the acquisition of practical and theoretical skills, knowledge and functional ideas for development and for the search for truth and knowledge and the creation and communication of ideas (Nanna, 1997 as cited in Aaron, 1992). In short, examination malpractices have become a global quagmire. In many countries the world-over academic dishonesty, in the form of examination malpractices, has heightened and has taken on frightening dimensions. It is therefore important to have a better appreciation of the effects of examination malpractices from an ethical perspective.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Examination malpractices are a serious and punishable offence leading to instant disqualification of candidates or dismissal of the official involved. However, many perpetrators of the scourge are not caught or are simply ignored. Even when the perpetrators are caught and convicted, examination malpractices continue unabated. This could be because the causes and effects of examination malpractices have not been

fully appreciated. It is, as a result, imperative that both the causes and the effects of examination malpractices be assessed from an ethical perspective.

## **1.2 Operational definitions**

Malpractice – any illegal act by an individual or group, by teachers or any other person performing illegal activities against the set standards and regulations of examinations.

Examination – the act of students or candidates writing a test (as by questions) to determine what they know or have learnt.

Examination malpractice – An act of wrong doing, carried out by a candidate or groups of candidates or any other person, with the intention to cheat and gain unfair advantage in an examination.

## **1.3 Aim of the study**

To assess, from an ethical perspective, the causes and effects of examination malpractices on the educational standards, the character of offenders and the socio-economic performance of the country.

## **1.4 Objectives**

- a. To investigate the nature and extent of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Lusaka District.
- b. To establish the causes of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Lusaka District.
- c. To explain the effects of examination malpractices on education standards, the character of the offenders and the socio-economic performance of the country.

- d. To explore the measures that have been taken to combat examination malpractices in Lusaka District.
- e. To make an ethical assessment of the causes and effects of examination malpractices in Lusaka District

### **1.5 Research questions**

- a. What is the nature and extent of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Lusaka District?
- b. What are the causes of examination malpractices in secondary schools in Lusaka District?
- c. What are the effects of examination malpractices on the education standards, the character of offenders, as well as the socio-economic performance?
- d. What measures have been put in place to try and combat examination malpractices in Lusaka?
- e. How can examination malpractices be mitigated from an ethical point of view?

### **1.6 Theoretical framework**

The study made an ethical evaluation of the causes and effects of examination malpractices in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District. The following ethical theories were applied in making the evaluation: utilitarianism, justice theory, virtue theory and deontology. Utilitarian theory prescribes actions that are morally right if they are more favourable than unfavourable to everyone that is affected. Justice theory prescribes actions that are fair to those involved by treating all pupils as equals without

some having undue advantage over others. Virtue theory is concerned with good qualities of a person or moral uprightness cultivated over a period of time through good habits that help one develop the disposition not to involve oneself in malpractices. Deontological ethical theory emphasizes doing what is right according to one's obligations and duties. Thus, those involved in the handling and administration of examinations should adhere to their respective obligations and duties according to the laid down rules and regulations regardless of state of connection with those being examined. Otherwise, the purpose of having examinations would be defeated.

### **1.7 Methodology and Methods**

The study involved a qualitative research methodology which comprised empirical research and ethical analysis. In the empirical data, the methods used involved interviews and focus group discussions. Informal interviews were conducted with the District Education Board Secretary's office and the Examinations Council of Zambia. The philosophical part will involve an ethical analysis, of the empirical data using virtue theory, utilitarianism, deontology and justice ethical theory which also guided the collection of relevant empirical data.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

Examination malpractices pose a great threat to the validity and reliability of the education system. They introduce a trend that is harmful not only to moral development, but also to the intellectual development of youths in that, if not controlled graduates produced will lack the moral discipline, knowledge, skills and competence to exploit the resources at their disposal. Measures have been put in place to try and arrest the trend, but to no avail. It is, therefore, important to make an ethical evaluation of the causes and effects of examination malpractices. This would benefit not only the learners and the educational system but also to the nation as a whole.

### **1.9 Delimitations and limitations**

The study was restricted to secondary schools within the region of Lusaka. It did not look at each and every school in Zambia; rather it was based on selected schools, that is Chunga, Matero Girls, Kabulonga Boys, Chelstone and Kamwala Secondary Schools in Lusaka district. The research was limited in subject scope, as it mainly focused on the ethical dimensions involved in examinations in Zambia. Issues related to the distribution and writing of examinations was outside of the scope of the research.

The researcher faced some challenges during the study. In some instances, the intended respondents were unavailable even after having made an appointment, or had simply changed their minds about being part of the study. Some parents expressed scepticism towards the researcher that she might have been a reporter or someone just trying to spy on them.

### **1.10 Summary**

This chapter was an introduction to the study of the causes and effects of examination malpractices in Zambia with specific reference to Lusaka. It gave a brief background to the study and the statement of the problem. The aim of the study, the objectives and research questions have also been discussed. The chapter looked at the theoretical framework theories used in this study, the methodology and methods, the significance of the study and the delimitations and limitations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature that is available in relation to the causes and effects of examination malpractices worldwide. It also presents the importance of this particular study in relation to the already available literature.

### **2.1 Purpose of Education**

Education systems world-over use examinations to evaluate and assess the learning outcomes and the ability by students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of what has been learnt. Actions and practices that undermine the credibility of examinations pose a serious threat to the quality of educational systems and the attainment of their goals. The calamity of examination malpractices is not just the havoc it wreaks in educational systems, but also the gradual introduction of the learners into the practice of fraud.

Cheating behaviour in schools and colleges, including universities throughout the world is not new. Its effects have been felt in all segments of education and require urgent attention to curb it. Lambert, (2003), points to the fact that examination malpractices have found their hold because pupils and students, these days, value achievement and the ability to complete successfully their programmes, more than they value independent scholarship. On the part of the academic community, it has yet to develop intellectual values such as honesty, tolerance, respect, truth, rigour and fairness, which are associated with effective scholarship in students.

Currently, however, it seems that the aims of education are being defeated with the recurring feature of academic dishonesty, which has become a regular feature in most, if not all educational institutions. This is in spite of the fact that academic integrity is

expected to be a significant component of the philosophies and missions of many educational institutions (Stovall, 1989).

The collegiate experience is expected to enable students mature and grow along several dimensions which include the following: developing intellectual competencies; learning to manage emotions; developing and establishing autonomy; establishing identity; developing interpersonal relations; developing a sense of purpose; and developing integrity ( Kibler, 1993). Thus, the experience of attending any institution of learning is expected to equip students with necessary ingredients for developing intellectual and ethical competences so that the graduates can manage their lives and careers in a mature and sensible manner, establish identity, develop positive interpersonal relationship, develop a sense of direction and meaning and, most importantly, develop integrity ( Kibler, 1993:252- 260).

## **2.2 Examination malpractices outside of Africa**

As to when the trend of examination malpractices found its roots in human communities, it is not yet fully known. Kibler, (1993) dates examination malpractices back to thousands of years ago. He observed that their first known existence was in the Chinese civil service examinations where examinations were given in individual cubicles to prevent examinees from looking at the test papers of others. In the process, examiners searched for notes prior to entering the cubicles. In addition, the death penalty was effected for both the examinees and examiners should any one of them be found guilty of cheating. Despite the offence carrying a death penalty for both the examinee and the examiner, cheating still persisted. What perpetuated the vice in spite of the heavy penalty has been a subject of massive contention in modern scholarship.

China was not the only place to face the grievous challenges of examination malpractices. Perry (2000) observed that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cheating was widespread at college campuses in the United States. It was not considered a dishonourable act among the students. Academic dishonesty in the form of examination malpractices was endemic at all levels of education. In high schools in the United States of America, it was continuously growing as a problem despite having jail terms imposed for perpetrators who were caught and convicted. Students have been reported hiding notes in the toilet tanks, up their sleeves or neck ties. Methods of secretly signalling the right answer to friends were quiet varied, such as coded squeezes or pencil tapping or even repetitive body signals like hand movement or foot jerking to distribute answers, (ibid)

In Pakistan the trend of examination malpractice was on the increase. According to Nawar, (2011). In the past, the value system was strong but the breakdown in ethics in Pakistan culture generated many problems for the education sector. Some of the causes identified for the increase in malpractices included a weak educational system, pressure from teachers and parents, decline in ethical social values, self-centred culture and last but not the least, technological developments. Educational institutions have become so competitive in nature that students feel the pressure and burden which compels them to adopt unfair means. As per the criteria of Pakistan society, honesty was not important but getting a lucrative job is (ibid).

Another scholar Aina (1996) states that the environment in institutions also facilitates academic dishonesty and malpractices in that there are no clear rules and policies available on the issue. This has been attributed to the fact that most of the higher institutions of learning are private and more concerned with generating income. Despite

the fact that learners have individualised or different assimilating levels and capabilities, pressure from parents and teachers to get good grades is another reason for the increase in the trend.

In India, the observation was made that “examination malpractice, a form of corruption is sustained by whatever sustains corruption” (Maheshwari, 2009:119). It was noted that social, economic, political, religious and educational vices were celebrated and rewarded in the country while virtue was punished. In recent times everything was determined by the desire for success and wealth irrespective of the means used to achieve this success. There is a disjunction between the culturally acclaimed goals and the institutional procedures for achieving these goals (ibid).

The reasons that are given for learner involvement in examination malpractices are varied. Maheshwari (2009) asserted that learners were involved because they wanted to succeed in the fast changing world that places emphasis on certificate achievement. The trend was influenced by many factors such as lack of confidence as a result of inadequate preparation, peer influence, social influence, parental support and poor facilities in schools. Contemporary Indian society placed great emphasis on success oriented goals without equivalent emphasis on institutional means of attaining these goals. Many pupils were ready to give encouragement and pay costs for leakages and other malpractices because they desperately wanted to acquire certificates or degrees. As a result involvement in examination malpractices in some areas has become a thriving business for the examination mafias (ibid). Parents wanted good grades for their children, hence they went to the extent of bribing their way through to ensure their wards got unearned grades while teachers encourage them because they lacked the zeal to work but wanted to be praised. Others get involved partly because of financial,

material and other intangible gains derivable from involvement in examination malpractices.

There was the issue of over valuing of certificates which became an instant means of considerable social and economic leverage and opportunities for future political power. Consequently, students found short cuts in acquiring these certificates during examinations. According to Maheshwari (2009), the malady of examination malpractice seemed to be aggravated by the large and shameful involvement of all those who took part in examination administration. They pointed at teachers, school heads, parents, examination officials and even security agents as being responsible for the retrogressive trend into the educational setup. The impact of examination malpractice was so wide that every aspect of the individual or social life was feeling its negative influence. It was directly or indirectly causing wide spread damage to the social psychological and moral personality structure (ibid).

In Sweden, as maintained by Hogskoleverket (2006), examination malpractices were not a new phenomenon. Strict invigilation standards had been implemented to arrest the vice. However, malpractices changed in character as methods and available technology developed, and strategies for control and examination varied. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education reported an increase in cases of examination malpractice. Other forms of academic dishonesty had also increased from 62 % in 2003 to a further 13% in 2004, (ibid).

### **2.3 Examination malpractices within Africa**

In Africa, the situation is not any better. As the UNESCO (2004) report noted, educational systems were crisis ridden owing to examination malpractices in schools as well as universities. The report also noted examination malpractices start from primary

schools, mostly perpetuated by teachers at this level, and gradually extended to secondary schools and colleges. In universities, students who successfully practiced examination crimes in secondary schools without being caught saw it as the only way they could survive in an examination. The examination results tend to give a false picture of the state of affairs; hence some school graduates could not defend the grades obtained in examinations (UNESCO, 2004).

Umar (2004) stated that in Nigeria, it was almost a routine for students to cheat in examinations. Many Nigerian schools were partly to blame as they wanted their students to perform well in the examination and so rather than work through supervision of teaching and learning, they aided and abet examination malpractices. The situation was worsened with the shortage of qualified teachers, supply of instructional materials such as audio-visual aids, books, science equipment and the poor remuneration of teachers, supervisors and invigilators. Under these conditions, the option remaining was that of aiding pupils and students cheat in order to pass and ultimately get money. The phenomenon took forms such as the following: impersonation; bringing in foreign materials, such as books and calculators; substituting answer sheets with already worked scripts, stealing, converting, and misappropriating scripts; collusion in the examination hall involving copying; and organized cheating involving assistance from teachers and invigilators (Daramola, 1992).

As seen from the above discussion, examination malpractices come in different forms which in all cases violate and defeat the purpose of examinations. According to Ejiogu (2001), general moral decadence and the high premium placed on achievement and certificates by Nigerians had in recent times spawned examination fraud. The general over-dependence on educational certificates as a measure of one's knowledge and

competence led to a mad rush by most people for educational certificates. Vulnerable pupils, mostly from rural areas were adversely affected as they could not afford to offer the various items, such as money, to get assistance in examinations. Hence, they could not lift themselves out of poverty. Ejiogu (2001) further wrote that candidates caught cheating were not allowed to continue with the examination and are prohibited from taking any examination for the next two years. And if a candidate had already written any papers at the examination, the results were cancelled. In addition, a candidate might be prosecuted and, if found guilty, he/she was liable to conviction to a fine or imprisonment or both. Despite these measures having been put in place to try and arrest the scourge, the incidences of malpractices in examinations continued to wreck havoc. Even when measures had been put in place, a method might only work for a while as candidates were very smart at beating any effort directed at arresting the malpractice. Umar (2004: 54) has asserted, "Examination malpractices had seriously impinged upon the credibility of the results coming from public examinations bodies in Nigeria.....to an extent that the quality of certificates candidates obtain is doubtful". The situation degenerated to an extent that people looked down upon academic certificates because the ability of its holders could not be legitimately inferred from the test scores on which the certificates were based.

In Ghana, Anan (2010) reported that the occurrences of examination malpractices had assumed an alarming trend mainly due to candidates' fear of failing, lack of confidence, laziness, inadequate preparation and, above all, the inability to apply themselves to their studies. Students perfected various forms of cheating in examination rooms. Some of the tricks employed under this practice included, bribing, smuggling foreign materials into the examination rooms such as prepared notes and material written on palms, thighs (especially for girls), and in text books or novels for subjects such as literature,

and they also go in with various tricks such as “hide and seek” and gadgets designed to assist them to pass the examinations instead of relying on their own abilities (Anan, 2010).

More often than not, examination malpractices take the form of leakages of examination question papers, which sometimes come through teachers or lecturers, faculty offices and examination officers or the examination council itself. The resurgence of the problem which has reached alarming levels is due to poverty or inadequate remuneration of teachers and examination officers, and the students, realising this, collect large sums of money for examination officers so that examination papers could be leaked. The problem defied possible solutions because most of those who indulge in the vice happen to have rich and influential parents who used their influence in society to get their children and wards out of trouble. Even when they know that their children are guilty, they use their positions of power to influence the outcome of the investigations. This is because Ghanaian Society has become decadent (ibid).

Additionally, the issue of examination malpractices dented academia in Uganda. Cheating to pass an exam was a reality and the government of Uganda had to act fast to eradicate the fast growing trend. It was believed that the government was not doing enough to curb the fast growing trend as it is seen to be reluctant to call upon witnesses to that effect. According to Baku (2000: 14), “head teachers, invigilators or teachers whose students are found to have cheated or assisted in an examination should be held accountable on evidence from the culprit.” Many teachers had been implicated in examination leakages but they still continued to hold their respective positions. External assistance, which was the major form of malpractice, accounted for more than

81% of all misdeeds. Baku (2000) noted some of the key aspects to be the causes of examination malpractices as, the lack of integrity and professional ethics, the rural urban gap in education, whereby many schools in rural areas were largely ill prepared for examinations compared to their urban counterparts and lastly, the commercialisation of education (ibid).

It was viewed that a student who progressed in his/her academic pursuit through cheating would grow into a corrupt adult even after the studies, and the net effect of all this was a corrupt and incompetent future workforce in the country. The examination body always put measures to curb examination malpractices but unscrupulous characters continued to beat the system. The inspectorate of government recommended to the examination body to install cameras at the point of printing and in examination halls as a way of cutting down on the levels of malpractices in Uganda (Bolarin 2002).

With regard to examination malpractices in Malawi, the global corruption report (2001), stated that an eighth grade pupil at Chilinde primary school in Lilongwe, Malawi, complained about corruption. It was noted that pupils who did not work hard in class had been passing examinations through dubious means. It was also reported that in Malawi, the yearly examinations of 2009 were cancelled when some pupils were found in possession of the question papers beforehand.

Numerous studies having been carried out pertaining to examination malpractices. Punitive measures are in place, however, the scourge continues. From the available literature, there was enough evidence that very little if any, had been done from an ethical perspective. It is this gap that this particular study endeavoured to fill.

## **2.4 Examination malpractices in Zambia**

Zambia has not been spared from examination malpractices. In the recent past, it has sadly been noted that no examination period comes to an end without reports of examination malpractices. This is a disturbing turn of events especially that parents, teachers, supervisors and even school managers are involved in promoting the trend. Chileshe (2010) observed that sometimes, even officers from the Examination Council of Zambia, which is the regulatory body of examinations in the country, are involved. Most students go to the extreme of using money, sex, bullying, extortion and blackmail or whatever tool to obtain prior knowledge of the examination questions. Cases of malpractices involving assistance have increased over the years. Other cases involve candidates having prior knowledge of the examination questions and smuggling of foreign materials into the examination rooms. In some cases, the examination papers were stolen through the breakins, hence giving some candidates access to the examination papers before they are written (ibid).

In the recent past, it has sadly been noted that no examination period comes to an end without reports of malpractices. Incidences of such practices are widespread. The Times of Zambia (11<sup>th</sup> November, 2013) quoted the then Education Permanent Secretary as saying: "For the first time in the history of this country, the teachers that were arrested were immediately suspended. We had promised, during the sensitization talks with the provincial education officers that this year we would institute stringent measures to deal with teachers who would be involved in examination malpractices." He further said the majority of suspended teachers were from Copperbelt Province.

*I wish to report that the people who are behind this scheme have been discovered. The police have made headways into the investigations and*

*when you compare what has happened so far this year and the leakages that used to happen in the past, we would say that this is less compared to what used to happen in the past.*

He also explained that sufficient measures were put in place to curb examination malpractices.

*The number of pupils who benefited as a result of examination leakages is next to nothing when you compare to what used to happen in the past. We need to draw a line when you look at examination leakages. In the past we used to have situations where the papers leaked and the candidates managed to smuggle pre-written materials in the examination rooms or they scribbled something on their hands or pieces of papers and they were caught right in the examination rooms. There is a difference, the measures that we put in place ensured that those leakages were detected before the papers were written. And so those candidates were immediately expelled from writing examinations and teachers who were involved arrested.*

In reality, the prevalence of examination malpractices has continued to rise. In the past, this was attributed to the fact that for a long time, there was no investment in the education sector in terms of school constructions, while the number of student continued to grow putting intense pressure on education. In Zambia the education system is in the form of a pyramid one such that there are more learners at the lower level but few places at the higher institution of learning (Ngosa, 2012). The government expressed concern at the increasing rate of examination malpractice in which 315 cases were recorded in the 2012 grade 12 examinations compared to 267 cases in 2011

countrywide. As a result some candidates had their results nullified. Despite the nullification of the results, those who assisted the cheating candidates were never pursued (Times of Zambia, 11<sup>th</sup> November,2013).

The minority elite Zambians have manipulated the educational system to safeguard their interests in such a way that only the rich could afford to send their children and wards to well-equipped, staffed, resourced and expensive schools. Most of the missionary schools that were open to poor Zambians had more or less become a domain for rich citizens (All Africa Global Media, 2013). The system had also been manipulated in such a way that it favours an academic approach as opposed to the technical skills approach to education. Skills are deemed as being more suitable for those who fail, and because of this, learners are under pressure to perform well in academic subjects. Therefore, passing of examinations is highly emphasised and those that do not reach the set score are labelled as failures or drop outs. Those who think they cannot succeed on their own resort to leakages and other forms of malpractices (ibid).

The scenario in Zambia is so serious that, if left unchecked, the future of educational standards, social-economic standards and vulnerable pupils in the rural areas will be adversely affected. Annual reports of examination malpractices in Lusaka have brought about a number of adverse effects to an extent where some people have no regard for academic certificates, considering them as no more valuable than the pieces of paper on which they are printed. This calls for concerted efforts to address the scourge.

Dealing with examination malpractices does not only require prosecuting offenders, but also measures that prevent offences from occurring. Any failure to deal with examination malpractices effectively is liable to incubate an incompetent and corrupt

unsustainable future generation which is hazardous to our nation at large. Such can only be avoided if examination malpractices in education are nearly or completely weeded out. Education is the foundation for social progress and the footstool to personal human survival; hence, every approach that corrupts it is likely to impact negatively on the entire fabric of society.

### **2.5 Effects of examination malpractices**

Little do the perpetrators of examination malpractices realise that it affects the smooth running of society in that individuals involved tend to lose their moral direction, and hence ethics is no longer recognised as a vital cord for social harmony. In future, such individuals might become mediocre, corrupt, bootlickers, rumour mongers and inefficient workers. They might also lack self-confidence and expect others to act and work for them. As professionals, they fail to comprehend the complex rules of business; thereby, contributing to the country's underdevelopment. Examination malpractices promote nepotism. This happens when relatives are helped to have access to examinations before writing them. When possible, they do so using public resources to advance their personal and private interests. Paradoxically, this very fact of diverting "funds of the inclusive civic public for use of the more restricted primordial public by officials whose kinship origins are from such smaller enclaves," shows a loss of respect for the law, (Edward and Kibiru 1994: 245). This open flouting of regulations gradually engenders growing contempt for the government, including the loss of credibility in regard to the development goals of the country, however impressive the objectives may be. The logical outcome of this is obvious. It is as though corruption has been legalized. Any person who finds a chance will loot and plunder government property to benefit his/her own family, knowing with all certainty that if he/she does not do so, there will be no share reserved for him/her, and those who use malpractices will benefit more in

socio-economic progress. With this mentality innate in pupils, students and civil servants, sustained growth in any area of development will be hard to come by.

From the foregoing, one would immediately intuit a second and more sad outcome. After those who have elevated themselves to power through malpractices have spent the benefits acquired falsely to "enrich themselves and their ethnic groups," they might try to cover up these atrocious acts by embracing dictatorship governments and furthering the corrupt vice (Hoss, and Clarke, 1997). If leaders have such a mentality, citizens can never be mobilized for the purpose of developing a country when they know that the benefits will never trickle down to them, but only into the pockets of their leaders. A society which tolerates examination malpractices cannot sustain development. It rather fertilizes ingenuity in the handling of public resources such that, after the unfair distribution of resources has crippled political institutions, it becomes practically impossible to design and implement economic goals with concerted effort. This is because the so-called qualified people will in effect be only a bunch of bootlickers and corrupt incompetent leaders with little self-confidence based on the falsehood of their certificates.

Additionally, examination malpractices corrode the efficiency of the organs of the public service. The attention of officials is distracted from their public functions to activities which would facilitate their private benefits, for they know well enough that other top government officials are also enriching themselves out of government resources (Mulenga, 2003). Some would even refuse to be posted elsewhere, even in the event of promotion, for fear that they might lose better opportunities for "eating" from the city. If this attitude were given a fertile environment for growth, economic development would hardly be sustainable. Examinations of whatever calibre would lose their grip on societal confidence; they would only remain a mere means for social

acceptance and honest civil servants would end up frustrated thereby deterring innovation and subverting trust. In the process, government workers who have long been honest and committed to work would start transforming their labour from productive activities to activities which are unproductive, but where they are likely to benefit in some way. Furthermore when the majority of citizens will have come to realise that some of their leaders who occupy offices of authority acquired papers through examination malpractices, civil strife and violence may become imminent, thus disrupting the orderly functioning of markets, and may also discourage private investment. Moreover, in the context of disorder and violence, crime and graft abound. To curb such a situation, more money would be spent on maintaining law and order (ibid).

Examination malpractices can lead to serious deviation from moral norms which in turn bedevil development ambitions. According to Gakwandi (1995:113) such deviation is endorsed when "innocent students begin to see their colleagues erect huge houses, purchasing different types of cars and spending huge sums of money obtained through corrupt means upon using certificates gained through malpractices in examinations." Instead of coming from hard work, wealth is gained through corrupt means which further deters development.

Augustine (1998) observed that examination malpractices bred corruption and fighting the scourge called for more than changing institutional arrangements. The limitations of focusing only on adjustments in institutional arrangements and political structures were that the human person was left aside. The human person normally acted out of free choice and moral conviction. It could, therefore, not be presumed that if what had so far been proposed were implemented, examination malpractices fostered by communal

relationship, kinship and extended family obligations and loyalties would stop corroding behaviour in examinations, (ibid).

A substantive revolution regarding examinations may take place consciously or unconsciously. Augustine (1998) stated that it might be conscious when individuals, disillusioned and disenchanted with the conventional morality that supports examination malpractices, was condemned by making it known that it was wrong to do so and in place encouraged a morality of equal treatment of people regardless of their background. At another level, this revolution could be effected unconsciously from real changes in "socio-economic circumstances" (ibid). If hard work and self-reliance replaced complete dependence on certain already well-to-do family members, teachers, gadgets etc, examination malpractices could be reduced.

## **2.6 Summary**

It is clear from the literature reviewed, that corruption through examination malpractices will compromise not only educational standards, but also the social economic performance, hence the need to control and curb the trend in order to achieve safe, sustainable and efficient delivery of examinations in learning institutions. As Cloetel (1992:171) rightly postulates, "public functionaries should always be informed of the rules which apply in the work institution and which govern their conduct." Otherwise, examination malpractices, especially in the *Zambian* context, are likely to breed corrupt, incompetent leaders and they may have considerable destructive effects.

The results of examination malpractices point to the fact that the majority of students have a wrong notion about examination ethics. For example they conceive examination ethics to include the following: teachers helping their students to pass the examinations,

parents supporting their children to cheat and school principals arranging corporate cheating in their schools.

Examination malpractice is a serious and punishable offence. It can lead to instant disqualification of a candidate or dismissal on the part of the official involved. Unfortunately, many perpetrators of the scourge are not caught; they are simply ignored because the effects of examination malpractices have not been fully spelt out. It is, as a result, imperative that the effects of examination malpractices be assessed from an ethical standpoint to highlight their destructive and corrosive capacities if left unaddressed. For destruction of the moral character of individuals who are the agents of social change will almost certainly reflect itself in the malfunctioning of society as a whole. Ethical foundations in human educational achievement are integral to building an honest society.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the ethical theories that have been used in this study to guide the collection of relevant data and inform the evaluation of it from an ethical point of view. These theories include deontological theory, utilitarianism, virtue theory and justice theory.

An ethical theory is a systematic reflection of a particular view about the nature and basis of good or right. It provides reasons or norms for judging acts to be right or wrong and attempts to give a justification for these norms. An ethical theory provides ethical principles that embody certain values (Mackinnon, 2012:9).

### **3.1 Deontological theory**

Deontological ethics, also referred to as duty based ethics, is a theory which states that we have moral duties as human beings towards others that are determined by reason and not the consequences of our action. The person who does something because he believes it is the morally good thing to do (which Kant terms acting “from duty”) does have a good reason for doing it, has a morally good will.

Kant (1947) based his theory on the moral principle he called the categorical imperative which would be that which represented an action as necessary of itself without reference to another end. This calls for the “developing of the notion of a will that is highly esteemed for itself, that is the good will.” The will is the individual’s ability to make decisions on the basis of reason, as Kant argues that nothing is good without qualification except a good will, and a good will is pleasurable or in one’s self interest.

The deontological ethical theory is concerned with people performing the right action even if the action produces harm. Hence, people have a duty to do the right thing even

when the result is going to be unpleasant. Therefore, to make the correct moral choices requires that people have to understand what their moral duties are and what correct rules exist to regulate these duties. However, simply following the moral rules is often not sufficient; rather, there is also need to have the correct motivations. Furthermore, duties and obligations need to be determined objectively and absolutely, not subjectively (Kann, 1996). This therefore means that, if one has a moral duty not to lie, then lying is always wrong regardless of whether the outcomes are good or bad. It is wrong because it goes against the following two formulations of the Kantian moral law also referred to as the categorical imperative:

- Always act in such a way that you can also will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law.
- Act so that you treat humanity, both in your own person and in that of another, always as an end and never merely as a means.

According to Kant, then an action is wrong because

- 1) I am not willing to have everyone do it.
- 2) It treats other humans merely as means and not also as ends; it does not treat them with respect as rational thinking human beings.

In this theory, therefore, cheating in an examination is wrong because if everyone were to do it, it would defeat the very purpose of having examinations and it involves not treating others with respect as rational beings by deceiving them that we know the answers to the examination questions when in actual fact we do not.

### 3.2 Utilitarianism

The theory of utilitarianism belongs to a group of ethical theories known as consequentialist theories. These hold that the rightness of an action is determined solely by the amount of good consequences it produces. Actions are said to be goal directed and are justified by virtue of the end achieved. The greatest happiness of all is the right and proper and universally desirable end of human actions. According to (Hinman 1998:163) “the morality of an action is to be determined solely through an assessment of its consequences. It demands that the impact of the consequences on everyone affected by the action under consideration be considered”. Therefore, the morally right action ought to be the action that produces the greatest overall consequences for the greatest number of people concerned. In this case, the overall consequences, both short term and long term, of examination malpractices on the educational standards and the socio-economic performance of the country are the issue.

Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) summarised consequentialist ethics as follows: an action is right from an ethical point of view if and only if the sum total of utilities (net benefits) produced by that act is greater than the sum total of utilities produced by any other act that an agent could have performed in its place – that one action whose net benefits are greatest by comparison to the net benefits of all other possible alternatives. John Stuart Mill (1806 -1873) refined Bentham’s theory by developing a more defensible version of the utilitarian position. He introduced two elements of quality in pleasure, the higher order pleasures such as arts and intellectual pursuits that human beings enjoy over and above the lower order or basic pleasures.

There are two types of utilitarianism act and rule utilitarianism. **Act Utilitarians** maintain that in making an ethical decision, we must ask ourselves, “What effect will my doing this act in this situation, have on the general balance of good over evil?” If

cheating would mean producing the best consequences in a particular situation of examinations, then we ought to lie. **Rule Utilitarians** claim that we must choose that act that conforms to the general rule that would have the best consequences. In other words, we ought to ask ourselves, “what effect would everyone doing this kind of action have on the general balance of good over evil?” So, for example, the rule “to always tell the truth” in general promotes the good of everyone and therefore, should always be followed, even if in a certain situation, cheating would produce the best consequences.

The two, act and rule utilitarianism, are alike in that they both require the production of the greatest amount of happiness or pleasure for the greatest number of people (Mackinnon, 2012:59). Utilitarianism holds that one ought to consider the effects of his/her actions for the well-being of all that would be affected. Therefore, utilitarianism being a universalistic theory, requires that one takes into consideration the consequences of one’s actions not just for one’s own good, but for the good of all affected by the action.

Utilitarianism then contends that something is morally good to the extent that it produces a greater balance of pleasure over pain for the largest number of people involved –the greatest good of the action for the greatest number of people concerned (Thiroux, 1975: 23). The moral character of actions depends on the extent to which the actions actually help or hurt people.

### **3.3 Virtue theory**

As opposed to utilitarianism or deontological ethics whose focus is on action, virtue ethics focuses on what sort of person one ought to be. Virtue ethics deal with character traits or virtuous habits that people should have towards each other. It suggests that

morality is primarily a matter of individual character. The focus is on excellence of character. The theory is concerned with the good qualities of a person or on moral uprightness cultivated over a period of time through good habits (Spielthener, 2012). A moral virtue is a habit that enables one to exercise reason in all actions. One's life is lived according to virtue when one knows and chooses the reasonable middle ground between excesses and deficiency in ones' actions, emotions and desires, neither too much nor too little. Virtues avoid unreasonable extremes while vices are habits that go to extremes. The virtue of prudence guides one on what is reasonable in a given situation. Hence rashness and cowardice are perfect examples vices while temperance is a virtue.

Virtues are means to and constituents of happiness. There are character traits that are essential to a good life. Moral virtues are those dispositions that are generally desirable for people to have in the kinds of situations they typically encounter in their daily lives, (Peterson, 2004). For instance, if an honest person picks a purse, that person will make efforts to return it to its owner because it is the nature of this person to be honest. Similarly in examinations, a virtuous person will not be expected to cheat; this reflects the character of the candidate as being an honest person. Virtues generally do lead to right actions and this is because virtues motivate to act in a way that in a specific situation is generally right. It makes being virtuous an essential element in leading a moral life and encouraging young people to develop good character traits and embody them.

### **3.4 Justice theory**

The theory of justice prescribes actions of fairness, which is the ability to judge without reference to one's feelings or interests. Justice is an ethical theory that requires people getting what they deserve, that is, giving each person what is due to him or her.

The key idea rests on the claim that principles of justice, which are to be the foundation of society, are the result of an agreement in what Rawls calls the “original position”. This is a situation where people imagine that they are unaware of their race or personal situation and social circumstances; they imagine knowing nothing concerning them. They have to decide how to create a good society, in which everyone is treated fairly. To make sure that each person’s status and position are decided upon fairly, Rawls makes these people forget their present situation. They stand behind a “veil of ignorance”, the people act as though they do not know their special circumstances. According to Rawls (1999:118)

*No one knows his place in society, his class or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like. Nor again does anyone know his conception of the good, the particulars of his rational plan of life, or even the special features of his psychology such as his aversion to risk or liability to optimism or pessimism.*

The veil of ignorance is meant to ensure that choice and agreement occur from an impartial perspective. This is because it is easier to be impartial when an individual lacks personal information that leads to biased decisions and judgements. Individuals in the original position do not have personal information; therefore, they make their decisions under conditions of uncertainty. Spielthener (2012:76) states that “according to Rawls, for decisions ‘under uncertainty’, the rational principle is the so called MAXIMIN PRINCIPLE.” This principle states that under uncertainty, it is rational to choose that option which maximises the minimum, that is, the option which makes the worst outcome as good as possible. The original position and Rawls theory of justice has two main features, these being, impartiality which is ensured by the veil of

ignorance and rationality ensured by the maximin principle. Every rational being, therefore, has a conception of justice. All people have a rational ability to understand what is fair and what is not. They also know which principles will be accepted. For example, no rational being would take it as a fair procedure to achieve a good life at the expense of others.

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter has described the ethical theories that have been used in this study. Deontological ethical theory highlights the morality of actions based on their adherence to reason and good will. Utilitarianism evaluates the overall consequences of human actions. Virtue ethics emphasizes the moral character of the person. Justice theory focuses on actions of fairness. These theories were applied to the findings of this study in the chapter on ethical evaluation.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The methodology of this research is that of a qualitative and approach coupled with an ethical component. This chapter is, therefore, dealing with the description of the methods that were applied in carrying out this study.

### **4.1 Research design**

A research design, as defined by Orodho (2003) is the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. In this study, the researcher endeavoured to make an ethical evaluation of examination malpractices in Zambia using a case study of selected schools namely, Chunga Secondary, Matero Girls Secondary, Kabulonga Boys Secondary, Chelstone Secondary and Kamwala Secondary in Lusaka district, so as to allow an in-depth investigation of the problem at hand which is to evaluate from an ethical perspective the causes and effects of examination malpractices in Zambia.

### **4.2 Sources of data**

The data for the design was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. In-depth interviews which were semi structured in form were conducted with three officials from the Examinations Councils of Zambia and three from the District Education Board Secretary's office. Interviews were also conducted with the school managers as well as the guidance and counselling teachers from the selected schools, and some parents from the surrounding areas. Three focus group discussions were conducted with ten pupils each from each of the five selected schools. These interviews and discussion groups were used so as to probe further and get more detailed information about the participants' feelings, attitudes and opinions with regard to the

effects and ethical implications of examination malpractices. Secondary data sources included books, journals, newspapers and the internet.

### 4.3 Research site

Lusaka District was been selected as the study site since it was the area supposedly most affected by the scourge in question. It also had several schools from which information required for the study in question could be gathered.

Fig 1 Map of Zambia showing the location of Lusaka



### 4.4 Sampling techniques and sample size

Sampling is the procedure which a researcher uses to gather people, things or places to study, (Kombo and Tromp, 2009). It is also referred to as “the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population,” (Locke et. al., 2009:64). Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select participants for this study. Purposive sampling was particularly used in order to target authorised sources believed to be reliable and rich in the information key to the study. These comprised five school managers, four guidance and counselling teachers, three officials from the

DEBS office as well as three officials from ECZ. Convenience sampling was found necessary in that the researcher got information from pupils who volunteered to participate in 15 FGDs in the study. These groups made a total 150 pupils, that is, 30 from each of the five targeted schools. The study also comprised of 25 parents from the areas surrounding the schools. The total number of participants then was 190 people as shown in Table1.

**Table 1: Breakdown of the sample size**

<b>INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>OFFICIALS</b>	<b>TEACHERS</b>	<b>PTA</b>	<b>PUPILS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
ECZ	3				<b>3</b>
DEBS	3				<b>3</b>
CHELSTONE SECONDARY SCHOOL	1		5	30	<b>36</b>
CHUNGA SECONDARY SCHOOL	1	1	5	30	<b>37</b>
MATERO GIRLS SECONADRY SCHOOL	1	1	5	30	<b>37</b>
KABULONGA BOYS SECONDARY SCHOOL	1	1	5	30	<b>37</b>
KAMWALA SECONDARY SCHOOL	1	1	5	30	<b>37</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>190</b>

#### **4.5 Ethical protection of participants**

The study involved ethical issues regarding the anonymity of the respondents. The researcher sought permission from the gate keepers of the relevant institutions in this study. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study at the beginning

of each interview. The researcher also sought consent from each participant and all participants were guaranteed of their identities remaining anonymous and that the information they gave was purely for an academic study purpose. The participants were informed that they were free not to participate in the study if they did not feel comfortable to do so.

#### **4.6 Data analysis**

The data was analysed based on the common themes and emerging patterns from the findings, with the aid of charts and tables. The analysis included an ethical evaluation which involved the application of the theories mentioned in chapter three namely deontological,utilitarianism, virtue and justice ethical theories.

#### **4.7 Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology and methods that were used in the study. It has highlighted the population under investigation, the sampling techniques, and the location of the study, ethical protection of participants, data collection procedure and analysis as well as the theories used in the ethical evaluation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The main aim of this study was to make an ethical evaluation of the causes and effects of examination malpractices. Therefore, this chapter presents the findings from the investigations carried out in the field. The first four objectives of the study dealt with issues to do with the following:

- i. To investigate the nature and extent of examination malpractices in secondary schools.
- ii. To establish the causes of examination malpractices in secondary schools .
- iii. To explain the effects of examination malpractices on education standards, the character of the offenders and on the socio-economic performance of the country.
- iv. To explore the measures that have been taken to combat examination malpractices in Zambia.

This chapter not only presents the findings of the study corresponding to the objectives as gathered from the participants.but it also provides a discussion and analysis of the data.

### **5.1 The nature and extent of examination malpractices**

The study established that incidences of examination malpractices had in recent times taken a dangerous and disturbing turn because parents, teachers, supervisors and even school managers were directly involved. In some instances, even officers from the

Examinations Council of Zambia were involved. The study also discovered that examination malpractices were commonly committed before and during the examination, and sometimes, though rarely, after the examination stage. It was noted that during each examination session, examination candidates invented different ways of cheating with some methods being so challenging and sophisticated that invigilators were unable to detect them. The participants, mostly learners, observed that the most common forms of examination malpractices were the following:

**Coded sign language:** The pupils said that this took different forms such as a funny cough, tapping of the foot or pen, or dropping a pencil, pen or rubber simply to attract the attention of a friend in order for them to communicate the answers between them.

**Written notes:** This was when candidates wrote short notes or answers on their palms, handkerchiefs, thighs for girls, and hems of their clothes or even on pieces of paper which they then shove in their neckties and refer to them during the examination.

**Leakage:** This was a situation where the candidates had knowledge of the questions in advance and worked out the answers before the actual writing of the particular examination. The pupils were most likely to have better results than their counterparts who did not have access to the questions in that they read relevant material and in some cases even consulted other people to coach them.

**Impersonation:** This involved one person writing an examination for another candidate by pretending to be the rightful candidate.

**Assistance from teachers:** At times questions were answered by teachers and the answers were distributed to those that contributed something to finance the scam.

Some pupils, 22%, who were in grade 12 even confessed to having committed at least one of the stated forms of malpractice and that they would still do it if an opportunity availed itself and as long as they were not caught.

The respondents from ECZ said that there had been instances where supervisors and invigilators had been bought by parents or the pupils themselves to enable them engage in examination malpractices. In this case, the supervisor or invigilator allowed the pupils to take the question papers outside the examination room. At times, answers were written by teachers on behalf of pupils.

These malpractices have attained an alarming level in that they are becoming more and more sophisticated and institutionalised. Efforts by government and other stakeholders in the education sector to curb the trend have not yet yielded satisfactory results. They are so rampant in that in some cases, examination officials from ECZ, school authorities and parents are directly involved in examination malpractices.

## **5.2 Causes of examination malpractices**

According to data collected from the study, examination malpractices were caused and sustained by various factors such as laziness, peer pressure, societal and parental influence, poor teaching/learning facilities and lack of confidence by the learners due to inadequate preparation. 43% of the respondents said that pupils were compelled to engage in examination malpractices for fear of failing and thereby jeopardizing their future, economically, politically and socially.

Some participants, about 14% of them, even went further to justify the conduct of examination malpractice as fair, considering that everyone was practicing it. They said that not engaging in malpractice would be disfavouring oneself. Another 14% of the participants expressed concern that examination malpractices had become a lucrative

affair. Candidates were said to equip themselves with money in the hope that leakages would be availed at a fee in the form of prior knowledge of examination questions.

90% of the participants cited parents and guardians as contributing to the rise of malpractice in examinations due to the pressure they exerted on their children and wards to attain excellent results regardless of the learners' capabilities. The findings showed that some parents went to the extent of paying other people to write examinations on behalf of their children. It was considered good and acceptable that parents wanted success for their children and wards, but wrong and condemnable when they found no better way of assisting them other than helping them engage in examination malpractices. It was said, however, that there were other parents who were upright and would love to have their children genuinely reap the fruits of their labour.

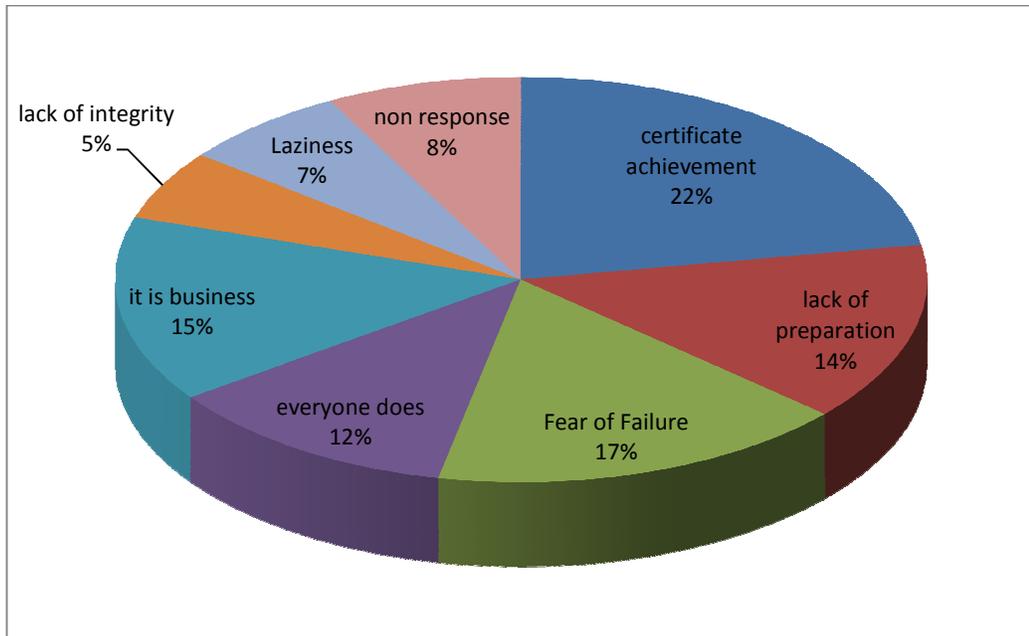
It was also revealed that some teachers equally contributed to the occurrence of malpractices in that they lacked the zeal to work or teach effectively and hence they failed to cover the prescribed syllabuses. Despite this attitude, they wanted to be seen to be working and be praised and recognised for a job not well done or, as in some instances, not done at all. Some teachers even went as far as collecting money from the learners in exchange for examination question papers. On the other hand, it was cited by the Guidance and Counselling teachers that there was a critical lack of adequate teaching/learning materials in schools, such as text books. For example, in a class of about 75 pupils, a teacher might only have about 20 text books in a particular subject to be distributed during lessons. All the teachers said that, in some instances, the teaching and learning equipment were obsolete or outdated.

Furthermore, an issue of tertiary education came up. The findings from the study indicated that every candidate wanted to get high grades in order to secure a place in a

public university or colleges where places were limited due to inadequate infrastructure and only those with excellent results were admitted with government bursaries made available to them. The scramble for these few places led many into engaging in examination malpractices just so that they could secure themselves a place in these higher institutions as a pathway to social and economical leverage. All the participants indicated that the issue of greed and corruption that was the major contributing factor to examination malpractices.

As suggested in the pie chart below, there was widespread perception among those interviewed that examination malpractices were on the increase. Top on the list of factors responsible for examination malpractices in Zambia was the dire need for certificate achievement which took a larger share of 22% as shown in the pie chart. Fear of failure on the part of the examinees ranked second on the list at 17%. Yet this second point could but be conjoined with the first. The fear of failure could actually be the fear not to have the certificate that guarantees one economic, political and social success in this fast growing technological world.

**Fig 2 Chart showing perceived causes of examination malpractice.**



Some even went further justifying the conduct as is suggested in the chart. A percentage as large as 12% of the participants boldly asserted that it was only fair for one to engage in examination malpractices since everyone did it. Not doing so would mean disadvantaging oneself. But did this mean that our examinations or educational playing field was not anywhere near fairness? Or did this entail that it was normal in Zambia to compromise the core purpose of education i.e., the attainment of knowledge and development of skills befitting social progress, for our self-interests? These were some, among many questions, that this dissertation grappled with from an ethical perspective.

Moreover, from the findings, there was a growing concern that examination malpractices had become a lucrative affair, as 15% of the participants indicated. People pointed to the fact that at any point and time of an examination, the examinees would ensure that they had money at their disposal. Their underlying hope was that leakages, in the form of prior knowledge of examination questions, would be availed at a fee. This raised even more pressing questions: how were papers leaked from safe and

protected areas to the general public? Who masterminded the leakage of question papers in exchange for money prior to the examinations?

Seeing that there was money involved, as the findings indicated, the core purpose of education was seriously threatened. Pupils and parents were often faced with unscrupulous money mongers who greeted them with fake examination papers backed with a false perception of providing education and administering examinations as a whole. This not only built distrust but also perpetuated the vice. One who had been deceived would equally want to deceive others by feigning knowledge through even greater malpractices or other forms of fraud. To put it succinctly clear, those who would have graduated under the pretext of some prior knowledge of examinations were certainly less likely to be effective in society. You cannot expect an unsharpened knife to cut as a double edged sword! One has to be genuinely trained and imparted with the right skills to perform efficiently and effectively in what he/she is educationally equipped for. Examination malpractices only serve to negate this noble social purpose of education.

Such a wrong sense of education is evidenced in the fact that a small fraction of participants, (5%) thought that examination malpractices were fuelled by lack of integrity by those practising it. Though not particularly clear as to whom this is directed, obviously lack of integrity involves everyone concerned, namely the examinee, the examiners, and the parents as well as the Examinations Council of Zambia to whom evidence of what has been prepared is only known. If the question of lack of integrity is thus pressing, what is the way forward? How is the educational system to be re-arranged and implement laws that will safeguard the core purpose and value of education? Who are to be the key players in the implementation of policies against the scourge? Is it the teachers, pupils, parents, or the boards? How are people,

both those involved, and those not involved, to internalise the will to resist the pandemic?

Further, evidence points to the fact that there is a growing laxity with preparedness for examinations among pupils. This is on account of growing trends of laziness exacerbated by the growing margin in the ratio of teacher to pupil. A question arises as to how the learners are to be motivated to apply themselves to their school work for the benefit of the individual and society at large.

### **5.3 Effects of examination malpractices on educational standards and socio-economic performance**

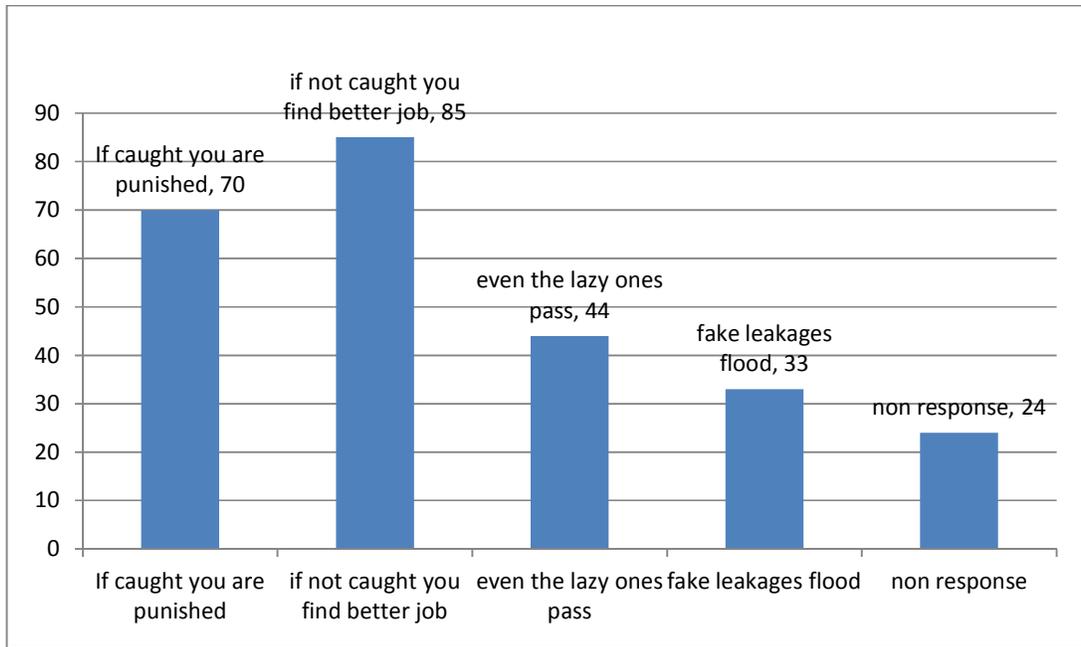
The effects of examination malpractices are enormous. As was pointed out by some participants, the officials from ECZ and DEBS office, examination malpractices gave pupils a false sense of achievement or success as they were awarded with certificates that they did not deserve, a practice that could be avoided if learners were adequately prepared to exercise their knowledge opportunity according to the educational goals. As can be seen in fig. 3, it was sad to note that a good number of pupils thought that the only negative thing about examination malpractices was getting caught in the act and being disqualified. They perceived the act as normal and good as long as one was not caught. They further said that it was not bad in that a lot of pupils, even those that had not revised, ended up passing the examination.

The participants, that is officials from the two institutions, all teachers and some parents mentioned that despite the perceived benefits of examination malpractices, they defeat the whole purpose of examinations and education as a whole. This supports the literature review from the World Bank group (2000) and (Umar 2004) because examination malpractices breed severe negative effects in that incompetent graduates

holding certificates without the know-how will be produced, thereby hindering productivity. This in the long run has a negative effect on socio-economic development in that students who steal their way into higher offices through examination malpractices would not find it difficult to engage in corrupt practices once in employment. As shown in figure 3 on page 43, not a single pupil pointed to this gruesome fact. 49% of the participants viewed the rising levels of moral decadence in the form of corruption as being fuelled largely by such acts as examination malpractices. The strong idea was that examination malpractices were like a contagious disease, especially when not adequately addressed. This is because even good pupils are lured into the act and, as they continue to “succeed” their learning motivation to work hard is weakened and their confidence is in turn dampened. On the other hand, pupils or learners who prefer to be honest and work hard to get genuine results may unfortunately not get competitive grades and are thereby being denied admission to higher institutions of learning or access to good jobs. This, therefore, means that honest and hardworking learners are denied the opportunity to attain their dreams and targets.

One of the respondents, an official from ECZ, strongly retorted that having a generation of enterprising youths would be difficult when the same generation was so preoccupied with shortcuts to life and was infected with the venom of examination malpractices each time they had to write an examination. In economic terms, the respondent said that such graduates could not help the country to meet its economic targets.

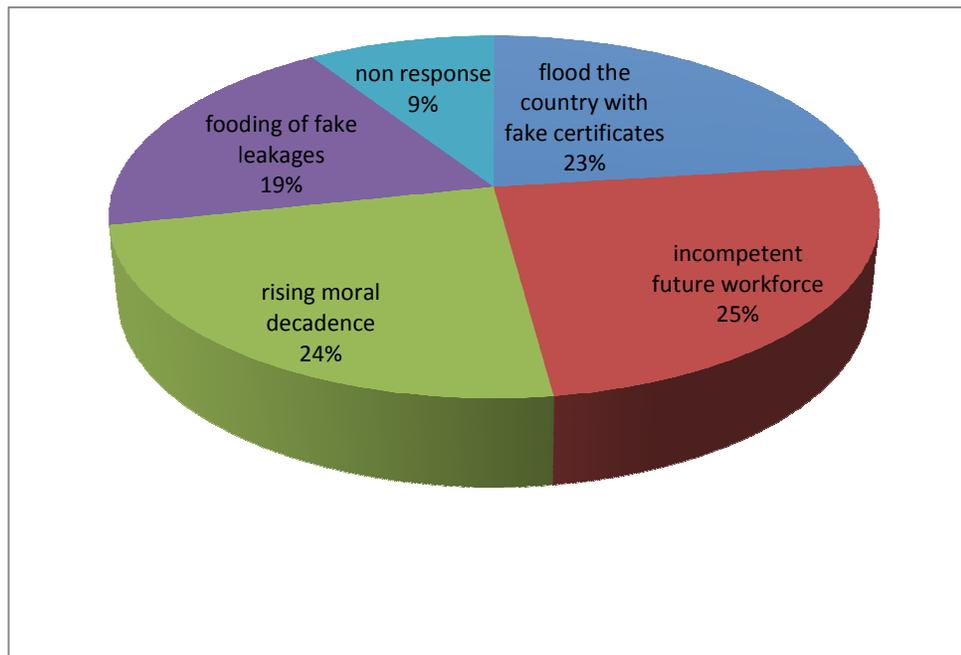
**Fig. 3 Histogram showing suggested effects of examination malpractice from the pupils.** (Note that the results given show that there are intersections among the pupils).



The negative effects of examination malpractices do not only affect the learners and their immediate community, but also the institutions from which the cheating candidates wrote their examinations. When the learners finally acquire the certificates whose academic content they can hardly measure up to in a competitive interview, the learning institutions which awarded the papers are also underrated. When particular educational institutions are associated with examination malpractices, their graduates as well as certificates issued may not be recognised or accepted in the job market. Teachers from such institutions can hardly be comfortable to mingle with their colleagues from other learning institutions. On the international scene, a country whose educational system is known for examination malpractices may also be underrated.

As the chart below shows, the effects of examination malpractices go beyond the horizon of education. They are a drag on national development, produce social discontent, and undermine faith in institutions because with them comes decreased job efficiency.

**Fig. 4 Perceived Effects of Examination Malpractices**



#### **5.4 Measures taken to curb examination malpractices**

It was worth noting that the Zambian government through the M0E and the ECZ have not ignored the existence of the mischief of examination malpractices. Measures have been taken to curb the vice which include the setting up of examinations security committees. These have been set up from the national level to provincial levels, district levels, and finally down to school levels in a bid to arrest the trend. Examination papers are being locked up in strong rooms in various examination centres prior to the day of administering the examination.. The ECZ has also introduced a toll free line (8383) for the public to use in reporting cases of examination malpractices. However, despite the good intention behind the introduction of this measure, it may not serve the purpose satisfactorily as one would have to be there physically to witness the malpractice, and sometimes, by the time the act is reported, there would be no evidence.

Some drastic measures have been put in place to curb the vice, such as when the culprit is caught or there is sufficient evidence that a malpractice has been committed, he/she is suspended from any examination until after a period of two years. On the part of teachers, when proved that one was involved in the facilitation of a malpractice, the teacher is to be expelled from the teaching service. However, despite having these measures in place with the intention of arresting the scourge, examination malpractices would continue to persist until all the involved parties change their attitudes toward the value of education and examinations in particular.

### **5.5 Summary**

This chapter presented, analysed and discussed the findings of the study. The study confirmed the literature review that examination malpractices are committed before, during and after examination. Such malpractices are committed using different methods and caused and sustained by various factors. The effects of such acts on the character of the perpetrators, on educational standards as well as on socio-economic performance are enormously retrogressive. Despite this realisation and the fact that certain measures having been put in place, the scourge continues to thrive.

## **CHAPTER SIX: ETHICAL EVALUATION**

### **6.0 Introduction**

Examination malpractices are wrong because of the negative effects at all levels of society, from destroying the moral integrity of the persons involved to producing counterfeit graduates. Examination malpractices eat at the very core of human progress. Therefore, in an attempt to alter the current trends towards examination malpractices

and salvage the education system and its aims, there is need to transform the characters of the persons involved, that is, the candidates, parents, teachers and all the other stakeholders. This entails bringing about an ethical paradigm shift that would emphasise on changing the current character dispositions of the people in Zambia towards examinations and education in general.

Character transformation is central because being ethical is not the same as doing whatever society accepts to be the right thing to do. Society may accept certain situations due to custom or usage over periods of time, but not necessarily because that is the right thing to do. Standards of behaviour in a society can deviate from what is ethical. Being ethical calls for one to conform to the well founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what people ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, and/or specific virtues (Svara 2007).

It is in this vein, therefore, that this chapter applies the ethical theories of deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics and justice in evaluating examination malpractices in Zambia.

### **6.1 Examination malpractices from the deontological point of view**

Deontological theory places emphasis on duty or obligation as a moral necessity. It calls for anyone with a duty towards others as well as oneself to fulfil it, and anyone with a responsibility for anything has the duty of carrying out the responsibility. It is for this reason that there is need for proper rules and regulations people impose on themselves by which they ought to operate to ensure harmony in society. Rules and regulations guide people to achieve their ends without impinging on the rights of other community members; otherwise, some people may take advantage of a lawless situation at the expense of others, especially of those who are disadvantaged. This calls

for people to act out of good will, or out of a sense of duty, and duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the moral law. According to Kant, nothing is good except a good will.

Kant, in his fundamental moral principle, the categorical imperative, states that one should do something only if they are willing to have the reason governing their action become a universal law that everyone else follows. Therefore, to believe that it is morally right to do something is to believe it is what everyone else ought to do. That is, one should never do something unless (a) it is possible for everyone to do it and (b) one is willing to have everyone do it. This requires that everyone should be treated as a free person equal to everyone else, and that everyone has a moral right to such treatment and a correlative duty to treat others in the same way. This would discredit examination malpractices that openly favour the advantaged over those that are disadvantaged. Not a single person would universalise examination malpractices (for doing so would at some point be a disadvantage to oneself). Shortly put, examination malpractices make those who assist candidates in answering examination questions as well as candidates themselves appear merely as a means to some end and never as ends in themselves. To respect each person as an end, one would not condone foul play. The playing field needs to be level if human dignity in oneself and in others is to be considered always as an end and never merely as a means.

Clearly, examination malpractices are perpetuated where the will to enforce the law against malpractices is weak. Therefore, perpetrators of the act seemingly go scot-free. Unless laws are rooted in morality, they remain to lack the force driven by people's conviction based on what their right reason tells them they ought to do. Examination malpractices just make the playing field unfair favouring one group over another and

breeding discontent in society. No one is likely to enjoy the fruits of a game if he/she knows that he defied the rules at some point in order to favour oneself.

It is commendable that the Zambian government has put measures in place to tighten and impose sanctions against public officials and anybody who is involved in examination malpractices of whatever degree, especially those who see it as a way to secure papers for their kith and kin. Yet, this has not reduced the intensity with which these untrammelled acts are gaining ground in Zambia. What is required is not simply creating awareness but the obeying of the rules and regulations governing examinations in Zambia. This would involve fundamental changes in people's attitudes and responses to accepted moral beliefs and rules in the positive direction, and this in turn involves, or rather requires, making the greatest effort of will.

## **6.2 Examination malpractices from the utilitarian point of view**

The moral principle of utilitarianism is the utility principle or the greatest pleasure principle which holds that actions are right in proportion as they promote happiness, and wrong if the effect is the reverse of happiness. Utilitarianism seeks a well-being in which all are happy as opposed to only the fortunate few. Individual pleasure is restricted for no one should be happy knowing that the happiness has been achieved at the expense of others, one must consider the consequences of one's actions and social consequences as being of prime importance.

Examination malpractices tend to favour the few that engage in the vice putting the rest of society at a disadvantage. However, act utilitarians would look at the short-term consequences of the vice. If examination malpractices would enable one to get high grades to proceed to higher levels in society, then it is the best action to do. The few candidates that pass the examinations with high marks are admitted to colleges and

universities at the expense of the majority of those who avoid malpractices. On the other hand, rule utilitarians would look at the long-term consequences of examination malpractices. They go beyond an individual attaining his aim, which is getting access to higher education. Moreover, as only a few candidates have access to such facilities, this would not be to everyone's advantage. Moreover, the greatest good cannot be achieved by favouring a few, equipping them with certificates when they are incapable of delivering what those certificates represent which may also reflect badly on their character.

### **6.3 Examination malpractices from the point of view of Virtue Ethics.**

This theory is centred on character traits or virtuous habits that people ought to have towards each other. In his *Nicomachean ethics* (1987), the Greek philosopher Aristotle explains that virtues avoid unreasonable extremes unlike vices that go to extremes. Virtues are means to and constituents of happiness, they choose the reasonable middle way between excess and deficiency in ones' actions, emotions and desires- neither too much nor too little. Therefore, a virtue is not to be practiced moderately but fully. For instance with regard to honesty, it is not good to moderately lie or cheat, we must simply be honest. Virtues are character traits that are essential to a good life of the individual and society and society in general.

Moral virtues are those dispositions that are generally desirable for individuals to have in the kinds of situations they typically encounter in their daily lives. They help to deal well with all the exigencies of human life. This means that in education, malpractices not only harm education as a system commensurate with human progress and development but it impinges on our nature and character as individual human beings. Cheating of any kind in an examination, be it before, during or after, is an act of dishonesty. The act, therefore, is ethically immoral in the light of virtue ethics. Being

so, the act cannot be morally acceptable for it does not contribute towards development of one's good character. If being honest in the light of virtue ethics is emphasized, then such a principle cannot go along with fraud.

#### **6.4 Examination malpractices from Justice Theory point of view**

In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls (1997), proposes two principles of justice. These can help in evaluating examination malpractices. The two principles are : (i) "each person is to have an equal right of the most extensive liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others; (ii) Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage and (b) attached to offices open to all" (ibid). The two principles have been chosen because, basically their aim is to "govern the assignment of rights and duties in institutions and to determine the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social life" (ibid). The second principle justifies inequalities if, and only if, they have compensating benefits for the least advantaged.

Examination malpractices are wrong as this is tantamount to allowing inequalities to exist between citizens in terms of opportunities. Only those with the means to access prior knowledge of examination questions would have an advantage. So what is needed is to lay down rules that are to everyone's advantage. This, according to Rawls, can be effected if positions of authority and offices of command are occupied by those that accessed examination questions on merit. However, this could only be attained if malpractices in examinations were completely eradicated to give every participant an equal chance in training and employment opportunities. To ensure justice requires, among others, a formulation of a just political constitution and just institutional arrangements.

Malpractices in examinations blur the fact of having similar life chances by favouring those who can sponsor their way through accessing prior knowledge of examination questions. In Zambia, examination malpractices separate the privileged from the underprivileged. In the end, this vice promotes rampant inequality everywhere including in educational and employment opportunities. Good schools are reserved, as it were, for those who can afford to pay. If they fear to fail or are not confident enough that they will pass, the short cut is to use examination malpractices. The logical outcome of unequal opportunities of education, especially at the tertiary level, leveraged by rampant examination malpractices would be a society headed for massive inequality that is not able to tap the best talent from its citizens.

As a corollary to examination malpractices, lack of equal opportunities will ensue which will lead to grave political, social and economic disaster. Many poor people cannot afford to bribe their way through examination malpractices since the act is expensive. So many poor people are likely to lag behind in their educational pursuits. They just know that they are poor and they envy the rich. To this effect, they are easily manipulated by selfish politicians to accept decisions that end with the betterment of the lives of the politicians themselves. Besides, the uneducated, by the very fact of their not being able to critique the usually fallacious arguments of politicians, end up voting for leaders who do not even care about distributive justice.

Unless policies to ensure equal opportunities at the base level of education in eradicating examination malpractices are implemented, "development in Zambia will continue to be frustrated leading to what the Economic Commission for Africa has called a political, social and economic nightmare", (Timberlake 1998).

## **CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Summary**

This study has evaluated the effects of examination malpractices in Lusaka District from an ethical perspective. The study presented an introduction of the paper. It particularly presented the background, the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, the objectives, research questions, significance of the study and methodology. The literature was reviewed from the relevant books, journals and internet on the

relevant topic and some countries that have been affected by examination malpractices were highlighted.

Ethical theories used in the ethical evaluation of this study have also been explained and discussed. These are the deontological ethical theory, utilitarianism, justice and virtue theories. The methodology involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative design, which involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of this study were related to the literature reviewed in that the problems caused by examination malpractices in Zambia were similar to many other countries world over. All the objectives of the study have been achieved as the effects of examination malpractices have been presented.

An ethical evaluation of the findings was done by applying the ethical theories mentioned above. Based on these theories, there is the need to reinforce a moral paradigm that would weed out the vice of malpractices in examinations, otherwise it would fertilize fraud in the running of public institutions and fraud which not only slows development but also eats at the heart of development.

## **7.2 Conclusion**

Examination malpractices have fuelled corruption. This has hampered the aims of democracy with regards to accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of governance. While it does remain the project of each individual to continue exercising the will to resist the temptation associated with examination malpractices, problems still abound in the quest to avert the act. Whereas this may remain, especially in the case of Zambia where people are poor on average, one's temptation to stop following a new moral order may be weakened if the public officials who impose the prescriptions of the law do not stop favouring people on any other basis than merit. Those in positions of authority

therefore should lead by example by being impartial in the allocation of resources and by internalising the ideal that it is wrong to use one's office to perpetuate any form of malpractice. The rank and file should also endeavour to internalise such moral precepts. Successful generations may come to embrace the morality of the new order that would not look at the individual's background but would treat all people equally. In turn laws and institutions will be objectifications of the will of the people.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

In view of the findings of this particular study, the following recommendations were made:

- The government should work towards raising public awareness on the retrogressive effects of examination malpractices.
- The government should work in conjunction with the communities and policy makers to conduct public awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of integrity of the examination system.
- There should be an inclusion of morality as a subject at various stages of the educational curriculum.
- The government should endeavour to adequately equip all public schools with modern learning/teaching equipment to enable pupils adequately prepare for examinations.
- The government should work towards putting up of professional restraint measures against examination malpractices in place.
- Government should put in place an incentive structure for officials such as teachers and others involved in the handling of examinations.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Semi Structured Interview Question Guide for DEBS and ECZ**

#### **Officials**

#### **The University of Zambia**

#### **School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

#### **Department of Philosophy and Applied Ethics**

#### **Introduction**

Researcher's self introduction.

Respondent's self introduction.

Researcher explains the purpose of the interview.

Researcher requests respondent's participation in the research.

Researcher assures the respondents' participation as confidential.

Researcher thanks the respondents for their availability to take part in the research.

### **Question guide**

- i. For how long have you been working in this institution?
- ii. What do you understand by the term examination malpractices?
- iii. What forms do you think examination malpractices take?
- iv. What do you think is the extent of examination malpractices in Zambia?
- v. What could be the major causes of examination malpractices in Zambia?
- vi. What are the possible effects of examination malpractices on the educational system in Zambia?
- vii. What are the possible effects of examination malpractices on the economic performance of the country?
- viii. What are the possible effects of examination malpractices on the Zambian society in general?
- ix. Do you think society is concerned about the effects of examination malpractices?
- x. Are the measures put in place by the Zambian government adequate to address examination malpractices?
- xi. If not, what further measures would you recommend to mitigate the problem?

## **Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Question Guide for Teachers**

**The University of Zambia**

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Department of Philosophy and Applied Ethics**

### **Introduction**

Researcher's self introduction.

Respondent's self introduction.

Researcher explains the purpose of the interview.

Researcher requests respondent's participation in the research.

Researcher assures the respondents' participation as confidential.

Researcher thanks the respondents for their availability to take part in the research.

### **Question guide**

- i. What do you understand by examination malpractices?

- ii. Have you experienced examination malpractices among your learners?
- iii. What forms do you think examination malpractices usually take?
- iv. What do you think causes examination malpractices in schools?
- v. In your opinion, what are the effects of examination malpractices on the educational system in Zambia?
- vi. What are the possible effects of examination malpractices on economic performance of the country?
- vii. What are the possible effects of examination malpractices on the Zambian society in general?
- viii. What measures have been put in place to curtail examination malpractices in your school?
- ix. Are the measures put in place adequate enough to address the problem?
- x. What further recommendations would you make to curb examination malpractices in schools?

## **Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Question Guide for Pupils**

**The University of Zambia**

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Department of Philosophy and Applied Ethics**

### **Introduction**

Researcher's self introduction.

Respondent's self introduction.

Researcher explains the purpose of the interview.

Researcher requests respondent's participation in the research.

Researcher assures the respondents' participation as confidential.

Researcher thanks the respondents for their availability to take part in the research

**Question guide**

- i. What do you understand by examination malpractices?
- ii. Are you aware of the existence of examination malpractices in schools?
- iii. What forms of examination malpractices do you know of?
- iv. What do you think causes examination malpractices?
- v. What do you think are the effects of examination malpractices on the educational system in Zambia?
- vi. What do you think are the possible effects of examination malpractices on the economic performance of the country?
- vii. What do think are the possible effects of examination malpractices on the Zambian society in general?
- viii. Do you think examination malpractices can be stopped in schools?
- ix. Give any suggestions on how you think examination malpractices can be stopped in your school.

## **Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Question Guide for Parents**

**The University of Zambia**

**School of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Department of Philosophy and Applied Ethic**

### **Introduction**

Researcher's self introduction.

Respondent's self introduction.

Researcher explains the purpose of the interview.

Researcher requests respondent's participation in the research.

Researcher assures the respondents' participation as confidential.

Researcher thanks the respondents for their availability to take part in the research

## **Question guide**

- i. What do you understand by the term examination malpractices?
- ii. What forms of examination malpractices are you aware or have heard of?
- iii. What do you think is the extent of examination malpractices in Zambia?
- iv. In your opinion, what are the causes of examination malpractices in Zambia?
- v. What problems do you think come about in the educational system due to examination malpractices?
- vi. What problems come about in the economic performance of the country due to examination malpractices?
- vii. What problems come about in society as a whole due to examination malpractices?
- viii. Are you concerned about examination malpractices in the country?
- ix. Do you think the government is doing enough to curb the trend of examination malpractices in schools?
- x. What recommendations can you make to further reduce the trend of examination malpractices in Zambia?

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