

## The Effect of School Governance on the Prevalence of KCSE Examination Cheating in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Kisii County, Kenya

Margaret Nekesa Shibo<sup>1</sup>, Fredrick O. Ogola<sup>2</sup>, Justus Gori<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> School of education, Maasai Mara University, Narok, Kenya

### \*Corresponding Author:

Margaret Nekesa Shibo

Email: [nekesamagret@yahoo.com](mailto:nekesamagret@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to highlight on the effect of school governance on the prevalence of KCSE examination cheating in public and private secondary schools in Kisii County of Kenya. The study employed ex post facto and survey research design. The target population comprised of 1119 subjects comprising of principals, invigilators and examination officers drawn from 317 public and 46 private secondary schools in Kisii County. A sample of 109 principals, 218 invigilators and 10 examination officials was selected through stratified random sampling so as to participate in the study. The study utilized questionnaires to collect data. The instruments were tested for reliability and adapted after they scored 0.752 and 0.765 for the Invigilators' questionnaire and School Principals' questionnaire respectively. The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used with the help of SPSS to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive analysis, by categorizing results into tables. The findings show that the current efforts put in place by KNEC to ensure compliance with the set rules and regulations to stop examination cheating in public and private secondary schools in Kisii County are not adequate. Following the findings, the study recommends that KNEC considers mobilizing resources to upscale its measures to check on examination cheating and resources to support use of modern technology to monitor KNEC examinations in Kisii County.

**Keywords:** School governance, KCSE examination, prevalence.

### INTRODUCTION

School examinations are a tool for measuring learners' mastery of content and instructors' effectiveness in delivering the content at different levels of schooling all over the world. In spite of KNEC's efforts in tightening rules and regulation and managing KCSE examinations, there is increasing evidence of cheating in Kisii County, especially through collusion, impersonation, and smuggling of pre-prepared information in examination rooms and use of mobile and other electronics devices. KCSE examination cheating in Kisii County has presented a challenge and consequently this study sought to determine the effects of KNEC rules and regulations in managing examination cheating in public and private secondary schools in the county.

Watson [1] found out that a principal and some teachers of a secondary school in Kisii County were assisting candidates to cheat by working out the questions in the library and some in the staff quarters and taking the responses to candidates. Apparently, the supervisors, invigilators as well as the watch man had been compromised to abet cheating [2]. Various arrests in a number of institutions have been reported in Kisii country.

Cheating in examinations is not only illegal, but also leads to the compromise of academic standards at institutional and individual student levels. It is a form of academic fraud that needs to be contained [3]. Nyamoita nad Otieno noted that some of the rules in place included: asking students to keep out of reach any books, cellular phones, calculators and other unauthorized items. This is clearly indicated in the academic regulation regarding examinations; checking around in students' desks in order to detect any items they may use to cheat; close supervision, and watch students' behaviour and body language, besides, the penalties are even spelt out to the students, yet cheating still continues. However, despite these rules and regulations students still get involved in cheating. It is important to note that inadequate KNEC based penalties on examination cheating, low level of enforcement of KNEC rules and regulations by invigilators, and poor school governance are likely to create an environment favourable for examination cheating. The grading of secondary schools, both public and private, based on their performance, is suspected to be one factor that cause exam irregularities, marring KCSE, since all schools want to maintain a good index, if not improve on them. There is therefore the need by teachers, the principals and the KNEC officials to do whatever it takes to generate better grades [4].

### **School Governance and Prevalence of Examination Cheating in Schools**

A study Abdulah [5] in Somali noted that, to manage students' cheating during examinations, the role of leaders at different levels is decided and the principals of the schools alone cannot keep the quality of education unless they participated every stakeholder from every angle. So, managing the students' cheating and other development in schools may require leadership to view from different perspectives. Abdulah concludes that the school management has a role to play in managing examination cheating in their respective schools. To minimize the students' cheating during examinations, the school management, school leaders are pioneers in bringing about alternative solutions in the schools.

In some countries in West Africa for instance we note that different countries have adopted different measures. Kyeremeh [6] reported that in what appears to be a name and shame approach by WAEC, the Brong Ahafo region was ranked first out of the ten regions of the country with the highest cases of mass cheating in the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) for 2014. Following the high level in examination cheating the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) gave approval for the closure of the Obuasi centre for WASSCE private candidates, owing to the persistent mass cheating there over the years [7]. This centre was not properly governed and was singled out to be highly vulnerable to examination cheating.

Iqbal *et al.*, [8] in Nigeria argued that preventing examination malpractice requires a school to see it as an institutional problem, plan solutions to it as a community and take a collaborative action to transform the school [9]. Iqbal *et al.*, found that poor teacher-student relationships not only hinder students from learning but also encourage examination malpractice. Students do not ask questions even when they do not understand the topic because of their perception of teacher behaviour. They are afraid of their teachers: some perceived their teachers to be "hostile to students", "abusive", "harsh", "not friendly" and "snooty". They perceived some of their teachers as uncaring and not interested in their learning: Teachers that are rude and hard on students will make them have hatred on such teachers and on their courses causing the students to cheat in exams. To prevent examination malpractice, institutions often aim at preventing students from engaging in it through legislation and structural arrangements during examinations but neglect the primary question of why students want to engage in examination malpractice [10]. It is therefore, important that school leaders do whatever is possible to ensure that examination cheating is prevented since; they are in a fiduciary position to do so. Institutions and policy makers should not neglect the basic need of helping students to develop a culture of integrity and morality in

tests and examinations through school programs.

Ogunji [11] established that poor examination planning and logistics contributed to high levels of examination cheating. These include providing unsuitable rooms, hall or examination venues resulting into cramped venues, haphazard sitting arrangements, loss of adequate control over the examinees, insufficient number of invigilators leading to overworking the few and poor invigilation, shortage of question papers and other examination materials. Often time's students and candidates do not know their examination numbers and centers until the day of examination. These anomalies and lapses create the platform for cheating in examination.

Most schools in the country today may not possess what it takes to produce students with quality results, yet their proprietors (government, individuals and cooperate organizations) may tie the promotion and other rewards of their teachers to students' performance. In Oyo, Ondo and Sokoto States, for example, school principals and head teachers were to be held responsible for the failure of their students in any external examinations. This has compelled teachers to aid their students to cheat in order to earn promotion and escape being sanctioned by their proprietors. In the same vein, "lazy teachers who have not taught would at all cost want their students to pass examinations since it is seen as a measure of good teaching" [12]. On school characteristics, Grimes and Rezek [13] revealed in their study that it appears that regular attendance at religious services is positively associated with cheating, and negatively associated with assisting others to cheat. This is inconsonance with the study of Bruggeman and Hart [14] where it was found that students in religious schools were "more likely to yield to tempting circumstances and exhibited a higher incidence of cheating than the secular school children."

In a proper learning situation, a disciplined student is the one expected to do the right thing at the right time [15]. Bator [16] also shared the same opinion where they argue that, a disciplined student is the one who is in the right place at the right time. However, in most schools, students misuse time through loitering in villages and yet time are a factor for achieving success, others arrive very late for classes missing lessons, which seems to affect their academic performance. This can be blamed on the existence of ineffective school rules and regulations especially concerning time management. When time is not properly managed, the student becomes ill prepared for the examinations and is most likely to engage in examination malpractices.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the Mixed research designs, that is, a blend between causal comparative research design and survey research design, owing to the nature of research and type of data collected. The causal

comparative research design starts with an effect and seeks possible causes.

Kisii County where the research was carried out has a total number of 363 secondary schools of which 317 were public schools and 46 private secondary schools distributed in the following sub-counties, Kitutu Chache North, Kitutu Chache South, Nyaribari Masaba, Nyaribari Chache, Bomachoge Borabu, Bomachoge Chache, Bobasi, South Mugirango and Bonchari. The study population included principals, invigilators and examination officials in Kisii County. This formed the target population [17]; For the purpose of this study the target population comprised of 363 secondary school principals, 726 invigilators (2 teachers per school, that is, those teachers who participated in the examinations invigilation / supervision exercise) drawn from 317 public and 46 private secondary schools, and 30 examination officials.

In this study, the target population totaled to 1119 respondents in all the 317 public, 46 private secondary schools, invigilators and examination officials in Kisii County. The study utilized questionnaires to collect data from the principals and invigilators, while interview schedules were used for collection of data from examination officers. This is because questionnaires tend to objectify, intensify and

standardize the observations that respondents make. The study used questionnaires to obtain qualitative data for analysis in Kisii County. Schwab [18] defines questionnaires as measuring instruments that ask individuals to answer a set of questions or respond to a set of statements.

The study obtained both qualitative and quantitative data. The collected data were categorized, coded, and analyzed. Qualitative data that was obtained from the open-ended items was analyzed thematically. The responses formed themes for analysis. The main themes and patterns in the responses were identified and analysed to determine the adequacy, usefulness and consistency of the information. Quantitative data was obtained using closed ended questions and was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as percentages, means and frequencies and inferential statistics; Pearson product moment correlation. This technique shows the direction and magnitude of the relationship between given variables [19].

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The invigilators were asked to indicate whether or not their school had adopted culture of reading in the classroom to prepare the candidates for exams. The response was as provided in Table below.

**Table-1: Effect of School Culture of Reading in the Classroom on Level of Examination Cheating**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	47	22.2
Disagree	32	15.1
Unsure	22	10.4
Agree	58	27.4
Strongly Agree	53	25
Total	212	100

The findings in Table above show that 52.4% of the respondents agreed that their school had adopted culture of reading in the classroom to prepare the candidates for exams, 10.4% were unsure, while 27.3% disagreed. This implied that a good number of schools had adopted a reading culture for their candidates. However, in many other schools in the County schools this was not the case. A non-reading school culture made candidates vulnerable to examination cheating. This is in agreement with Griggs [20] who found that

cheating can be reduced by creating a culture of reading and learning in the classroom. Students are trained to work on mathematical exercises daily in the mornings so as to develop their confidence in it.

### School Heads and Examination Cheating

The response to whether or not school heads created the enabling environment of students cheating in examinations were as provided in Table below.

**Table-2: School Heads and Examination Cheating**

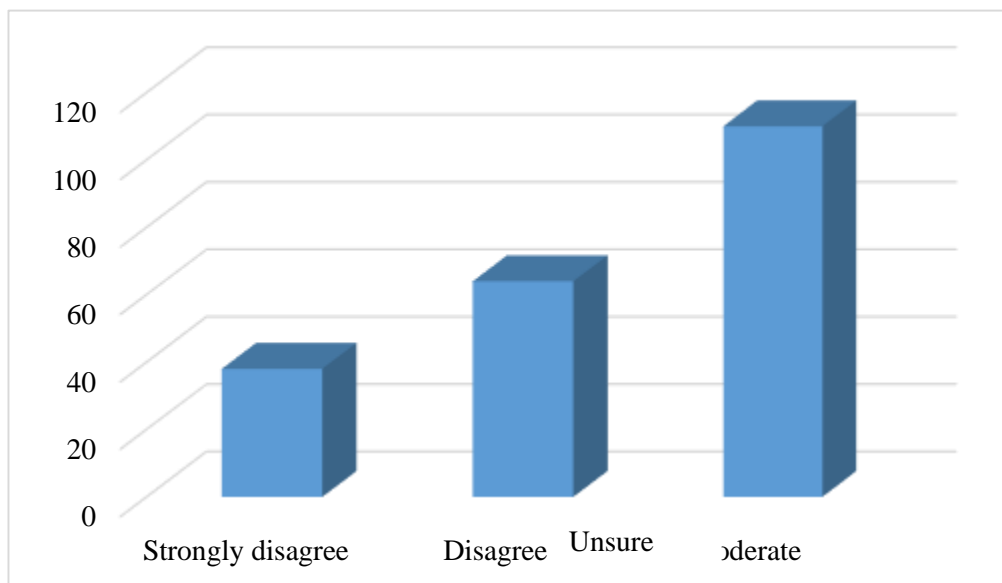
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	38	17.9
Disagree	64	30.2
Unsure	110	51.9
Total	212	100

The findings in the table above shows that 48.1% of respondents disagreed to the statement

asserting that school heads created the enabling environment of students cheating in examinations,

51.9% were unsure to this assertion. The findings show that principals did not support examination cheating and thus, were keen in ensuring an examination cheating

free environment. This is also illustrated in the Figure below.



**Fig-1: School Heads and Examination Cheating**

**Methods of Boosting Students Confidence in examination**

The response as to whether or not the invigilators agreed that their respective schools of

invigilation had failed to employ methods of boosting students Confidence in examination was as provided in Table below.

**Table-3: Methods of Boosting Students Confidence in examination**

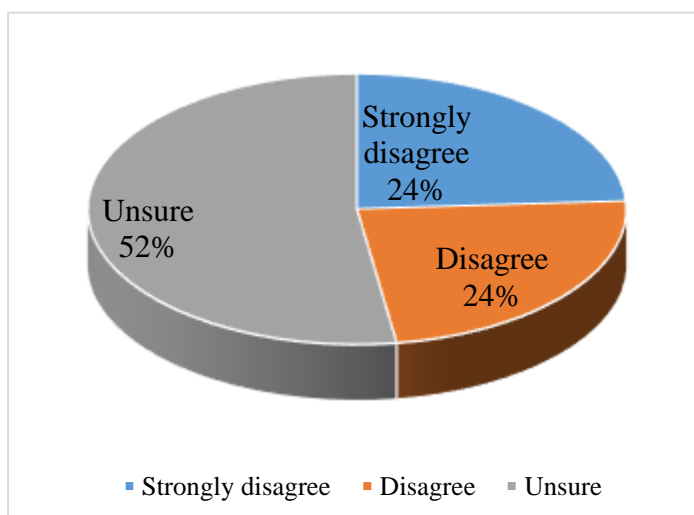
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	52	24.5
Disagree	80	37.7
Unsure	49	23.1
Agree	31	14.6
Total	212	100

The findings in Table above show that 64.2% of the invigilators disagreed to the statement purporting that their respective schools of invigilation had failed to employ methods of boosting students' confidence in examination, 23.1% were unsure, while 14.6% agreed. This implied that schools had done their best as institutions to boost students' confidence in examination, and thus, this could not a reason behind examination cheating. Nyamwange, Ondima and Onderi [21] noted the importance of boosting students' confidence as a means of preventing examination cheating. They argued that behaviour modification is one of those measures where students are encouraged to

strengthen their ego, build their self-esteem and boost their self-confidence. On the same note a study by Griggs [22] mentions boosting of students confidence as one of the methods employed to deal with exam cheating. Students are trained to work on mathematical exercises daily in the mornings so as to develop their confidence in it. They are also given storybooks to read.

**School Boards' Strategic Direction**

The response to whether or not the respondents agreed that failure by school board to provide for strategic direction contributes to exam cheating was as provided in Figure below.



**Fig-2: School Boards' Strategic Direction**

The findings in Figure above shows that 52% of the respondents are unsure to the statement purporting that failure by school board to provide for strategic direction contributes to exam cheating, while 48% disagreed. The findings show that the invigilators did not blame the school board for failing to provide strategic direction in curbing examination cheating. There is the usual blame game on stakeholders blaming each other as the problem continues to expand itself. This therefore would mean that according to the head

teachers and the problem was mainly with the Kenya National Examination Council.

**School Governance and Prevention of Examination Cheating**

Several statements indicative of school governance for prevention of examination cheating were responded to. Means were computed and the result was as provided in Tables below.

**Table-4: School Governance for Prevention of Examination Cheating**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev
School principals allow students to cheat in order to earn promotion	212	1.00	3.00	2.0236	.83434
School principals allow students to cheat in order to escape being sanctioned by their proprietors	212	1.00	3.00	2.2264	.70587
Poor remuneration factors encourage teacher involvement in examination malpractice as the candidates tip the teachers	212	1.00	5.00	2.1179	1.06217
Poor pay related factors encourage teacher involvement in examination malpractice	212	1.00	5.00	3.3443	1.48908

From the findings in Table above, it is established that poor pay related factors somehow encouraged teacher involvement in examination malpractice. Most of the respondents were unsure (mean score 3.3443) to this assertion that their school had adopted culture of reading in the classroom to prepare the candidates for exams. The other statements recorded a mean score of below 3.0. The study shows that poor remuneration and school factors were not major influencers to examination cheating.

The findings in Table above imply that poor remuneration factors did encourage teacher involvement in examination malpractice as the candidates tip the teachers, but to a small extent. Badmus [23] links poor remuneration with examination malpractices. In fact the argument there is that most schools in the country today may not possess what it takes to produce students with quality results, yet their proprietors (government, individuals and cooperate organizations) may tie the promotion and other rewards of their teachers to students' performance.

**Table-5: School Governance for Prevention of Examination Cheating (Continued)**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Candidates cheat to cover up for Teachers who don't cover their work	212	1.00	3.00	1.8538	.78029
Students cheat to motivate their teachers	212	1.00	3.00	1.8538	.76804
Students cheat because of poor leadership practices from teachers	212	1.00	3.00	1.9481	.95993
Valid N (listwise)	212				

The findings in Table above show that all the studied statements recorded mean scores below 3.0, thus implying that the invigilators did not agree with the statements. It means therefore that school principals did not engage themselves in creating an enabling environment for students to cheat in examination. Candidates did not cheat to cover up for teachers who don't cover their work. According to most of the invigilators, it is not true that the schools had failed to employ methods of boosting students' confidence in examination. They also did not think that failure by school board to provide for strategic direction contributes to exam cheating. This just means that there were other factors, possibly non-school factors, not school governance issues that were to blame for examination cheating in public and private secondary schools. Much still needs to be done in respect to school governance so as to address these challenges. The legal framework alone cannot work. This finding echoes from an earlier study of Alutu & Aluede [24] who reported that, despite the legal framework put in place,

examination irregularities have occurred with every release of KCSE results, this is due to examination malpractices, which can be defined as a deliberate wrong doing contrary to official examination rules designed to place a candidate at an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

### **School Governance and the Prevalence of Examination Cheating**

A Pearson correlation was computed to determine the relationship between school governance and prevalence of examination cheating. This was also in testing hypothesis Ho3, which read '*There is no significant relationship between the school governance and the prevalence of examination cheating in public and private secondary schools in Kisii County*' and the result were as presented in Table below. **Relation between School Governance and Prevalence of**

### **Examination Cheating**

**Table-6: Pearson Correlation between School Governance and Prevalence of Examination Cheating**

		School Governance	Level of Examination Cheating
School governance	Pearson Correlation	1	.152*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.027
	N	212	212
Level of Examination Cheating	Pearson Correlation	.152*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	
	N	212	212

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The finding in Table above shows that there is a positive correlation between school governance and prevalence of examination cheating at 0.152. This level is much higher than the test significance level at 0.05. This implied that school governance greatly influenced the level of examination cheating in Kisii County. It means that poor school governance contributed to high levels of examination cheating in the County. Following this finding the study rejects the hypothesis which read '*There is no significant relationship between the school governance and the prevalence of examination cheating in public and private secondary schools in Kisii County*'. It thus suffices that good school governance could lead to low levels of examination cheating in Kisii County. Poor governance can also lead to the urge to indulge in examination malpractices.

Alutu and Aluede [25] reported Ondo and Sokoto States in Nigeria, school principals and head teachers were to be held responsible for the failure of their students in any external examinations. This has compelled teachers to aid their students to cheat in order to earn promotion and escape being sanctioned by their proprietors. School Principals have a fiduciary responsibility in examination malpractices registered in their schools.

### **KNEC Officials on School Governance and KCSE Examination Cheating in Schools**

According to the findings from interview schedules, some examination officers indicated that once school management teams can be responsible enough to curb cheating and also encourage candidates

not to engage in irregularities then we shall substantially cut this vice to size. The officers also indicated that there were cases where some teachers assist children to cheat and this is frustrating the council's efforts to guard the integrity of the examinations.

### School Type and Principals Likelihood to Favor Examination Cheating

A Pearson correlation was computed to establish a relationship between school type and the likelihood of the principal to create an enabling environment for students to cheat in examination. The results were as provided in Table below.

**Table-7: Relationship between School Type and Principals Likelihood to favour Examination Cheating**

		School Type (Public or Private)	School principals create an enabling environment for students to Cheat in examination
School Type (Public or Private)	Pearson Correlation	1	.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.510
	N	212	212
School principals create an enabling environment for students to Cheat in examination	Pearson Correlation	.090	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.510	
	N	212	212

$\alpha = 0.05$ ;  $df = 212$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ; Critical  $r = 0.139$

When  $P < 0.05$  = you reject the null hypothesis

When  $P > 0.05$  = you retain the null hypothesis

The findings in Table above show that there was a positive Pearson correlation between school type and the likelihood of the principal to create an enabling environment for students to cheat in examination at 0.090. That is,  $P > 0.05$ , thus we reject the null hypothesis. In addition, 0.090 is less than the critical  $r$ , 0.139; we therefore, reject the null hypothesis. This study therefore, rejects the hypothesis  $H_{03}$ , which implied that there was no significant relationship between the school governance and the prevalence of examination cheating in public and private secondary schools in Kisii County. This level is slightly higher than the test significance level at 0.05. This implied that irrespective of whether it was a public school or a private school, school principals did not want their students to engage in examination cheating and therefore worked hard to promote an environment that inhibited examination cheating.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Invigilators did not agree that school heads created the enabling environment of students cheating in examinations. In fact what emerges from the study is the head teacher from the findings the study concludes that school governance greatly influenced the level of examination cheating in Kisii County. Most of the school principals and (principals) made efforts to ensure that their students did not engage in examination cheating. Most schools appreciated the view that cheating can be reduced by creating a culture of reading and learning in the classroom. In a school system that practices participatory management teachers also encourage the students to read and help in building student's confidence. From the study it is found from

the invigilators that it is not true that respective schools of invigilation had failed to employ methods of boosting students' confidence in examination. Schools principals ensured that this was done. These assessments should be done within a reasonable period before examinations, say to form four students, at the beginning of the examination The schools Board of Management through the Ministry of Education should consider organizing prior assessments to check on compliance levels in respect of the set KNEC rules and regulations year.

### REFERENCES

1. Watson, G, & Sottile, J; Cheating in the Digital Age: Do Students Cheat More in Online Courses? 2010. *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, 13(1).
2. Otieno, T; *Anxiety as 525,000 sit Final Examination*. Retrieved from <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Anxiety-as-525000-sit-final-examination/-/1056/2908232/-/y9gvg5/-/index.html>
3. Nyamoita, G, & Otieno, K; Effectiveness of Kenya National Examinations Council Measures in Curbing National Examination Malpractices in Public Secondary Schools in Kisii County. 2016. *International Journal of scientific research and management (IJSRM)*. 4, (2), 3882-3907.
4. Blom, A, Raza, R, Kiamba, Bayusuf & Adil; *Expanding Tertiary Education for Well-Paid Jobs Competitiveness and Shared Prosperity in Kenya*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. 2016.
5. Abdulah, I; *Students' Cheating During*

- Examinations in Some Selected Secondary Schools of Liban Zone, Somali Regional State.* Haramaya University. 2014. Print.
6. Kyeremeh, A; WAEC introduces measures to tackle exam malpractices. Retrieved from <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/WAEC-introduces-measures-to-tackle-exam-malpractices-350156>
  7. Kyeremeh, A; 2015. See note 6.
  8. Iqbal, KL, Muhammad, J, & Khan, J; Socio-economic Status of Students and Malpractices used in Examination in Urban areas of District Peshawar. 2011. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 49 (4), 601-609.
  9. Anderman, E, & Midgley, C; *Most high school students cheat.* New York, *New York live Science Review*, 5-7. 2000.
  10. Khan, IM; *Why Students Are Afraid of Exams?* Dawn, p.231. 2004.
  11. Ogunji, J; Examination Management and Examination Malpractice: The Nexus. 2011. *Journal of International Education Research – Fourth Quarter Volume 7, Number 4, 53 -64.*
  12. Munyaka, A; *Factors that affect performance in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education Examinations (KCSE) in private secondary schools in Kiambu West District.* Unpublished Med project report. University of Nairobi. 2008. Print.
  13. Grimes, PW, & Rezek, JP; The Determinants of Cheating by High School Economics Students: A Comparative study of Academic Dishonesty in the Transitional Economies. 2005. *International Review of Economics Education*, 4 (2), 23-45.
  14. Bruggeman, EL & Hart, KJ; Cheating, Lying, and Moral Reasoning by Religious and Secular High School students. 2001. *Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 89, pp. 340-4.
  15. Kajubi, SW; *Discipline Corporal Punishment and Violence Against Children in the school system.* Keynote Address; Public Lecture, 13th June 1997, Makerere University. 2007. Print.
  16. Mugenda, OM & Mugenda, AG; *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Acts Press, Nairobi-Kenya. 2003. Print.
  17. Schwab, D; *Research Methods for Organizational Studies* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). London, United Kingdom: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 2005. Print.
  18. Mugenda, OM. & Mugenda, AG; 2003. See note 20.
  19. Gall, MD, Gall, JP, & Borg, WR; *Educational Research: An Introduction* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: A & B Publications. 2003. Print.
  20. Griggs, RA; Methods of Curbing Examination Cheating. 2000. *Journal on Ethics*, pg. 100
  21. Nyamwange, C, Ondima, P, & Onderi PO; *Factors Influencing Examination Cheating Among Secondary School Students: 2013. A Case of Masaba South District of Kisii County, Kenya.* Elixir Psychology, vol56, 13519-13524
  22. Griggs, RA; 2000. See note 19.
  23. Badmus, GA; August, 15-16. *Accountability in Teaching/Learning Environment and Examination Malpractices.* A Paper Presented at a Two-Day Summit on Examination Malpractice in Nigeria Organized by the House of Representatives Committee on Education Held at the Shehu Musa Yar' Adua Centre, Abuja. 2006.
  24. Alutu, ANG & Aluede. O.; Secondary School Students' Perception of Examination Malpractices and Examination Ethics. 2006. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 20 (4), 295-300.
  25. Alutu, ANG & Aluede, O; 2006. See note 24.