

<b>Theme:</b>	Transforming educational assessment: Towards quality learning and informed decision making
<b>Sub-theme:</b>	Innovations and strategies to combat examination malpractices
<b>Title:</b>	Assessing the Effectiveness of Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB)'s Strategies in Curbing Examination Malpractice at the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) Level

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# Introduction

## Background

### *Historical Perspective*

- ❑ **Examination Malpractice: A pressing Global Challenge**
  - Threatens validity and reliability of academic assessments and thus undermines credibility of qualifications & education systems (Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015)
- ❑ Causes and strategies are divided into 3 stages: Before, During, After examinations (Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023)
- ❑ Globally, advent of **technology** introduced sophisticated methods of malpractice that traditional supervisory mechanisms struggle to detect and deter (Mkwachu & Mwila, 2024; Chala & Agago, 2022).
  - Some studies ((Lancaster & Clarke, 2016; Foltýnek et al., 2020) reveal contract cheating and digital impersonation in higher education (UK, Eastern Europe)
  - Eaton (2021) notes commercial essay mills and unauthorized collaboration via digital platforms, raising ethical and policy concerns in universities(Canada)
- ❑ Since in 19<sup>th</sup> century, various forms of examination cheating have emerged(Emaikwu, 2012) including: **pre-exam** leakages, use of unauthorized materials/devices, impersonation & contract cheating, collusion among candidates & supervisors

# Introduction

## Background

### *Historical Perspective*

- ❑ Anti-Malpractice Strategies/ Key Preventive Measures
  - Engaging adequate but honest examination personnel (Onyibe, Uma & Ibina, 2015)
  - Secure storage of materials including question papers and answer booklets (Orji, Madu & Nwachukwu, 2016)
  - Organized seating plans, strict identity checks, gadget bans [mobile phones & e-readers] (Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023)
  - Use of large examination halls (Oladipo et al., 2010)
  - Strengthening examination governance structures (UNEB, 2024).
  - Unannounced inspections in identified malpractice hotspots (Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023),
  - Cancellation and withholding of candidates' results
  - Continuous Assessment & accurately reporting students' grades to examination bodies (Adeyemi, 2010; Akanni & Odofin, 2015; Duvie & Eluwa, 2016).
- ❑ While these strategies have been widely adopted, there remains limited empirical evidence on their effectiveness in curbing examination practice.

# Introduction

## Background

### *Historical Perspective*

- ❑ In many **African countries**, examination malpractice has escalated to alarming levels, undermining the quality of education and the validity of academic qualifications
- ❑ **Mixed Evidence on Effectiveness of Existing Strategies**, need for empirical evaluation

#### **Ghana:**

- **Pre-examination** interventions were **largely effective** while **post-examination** measures showed **only limited impact** (Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023)
- Limited impact of punitive measures to curb malpractice e.g. banning offending schools from external examinations and imprisoning complicit supervisors (Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023)

#### **Nigeria:**

- Majority of interventions **before and after examinations** seen as **effective** in curbing malpractice (Duvie & Eluwa, 2016)
- Some success (Duvie & Eluwa, 2016 – 84% effectiveness in Nigeria)
- However, overemphasis on certification and systemic issues: **inadequate student preparation, and a shortage of qualified teachers** still drives malpractice and erode educational standards & yield underprepared graduates.

# Introduction

## Background

### *Historical Perspective*

#### ❑ In East Africa-Tanzania & Kenya:

- Undermining educational quality & trust in Kinondoni Municipality (Mkwachu & Mwila, 2024)
- High prevalence in public universities linked to home, school, course, and student factors (Adem et al., 2024) highlighting the multifaceted and deep-rooted presence nature of exam malpractice

# Introduction

## Background

### *Conceptual Perspective*

- ❑ Study focuses on three key concepts: examination malpractice, strategy effectiveness, and stakeholder collaboration.
- ❑ **Examination malpractice** a deliberate wrongdoing that contravenes official examination rules, designed to give a candidate an unfair advantage or disadvantage (Wilayat, 2009) . Similarly, Fasasi (2006) describes it as misconduct or improper practice before, during, or after an examination by examinees or others, aiming to obtain good results through fraudulent means.
- ❑ However, this study conceptualizes examination malpractice as any intentional act by candidates, educators, or other stakeholders that violates examination regulations to gain an unfair advantage in Uganda's Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).
- ❑ **Strategy effectiveness** pertains to the degree to which implemented measures achieve their intended outcomes by an organization (Richard et al., 2009). It involves evaluating how well strategies deter or prevent examination malpractice
- ❑ **Stakeholder collaboration** refers to the dynamic process where multiple stakeholders actively engage in joint, interdependent activities to achieve mutual goals (Bedwell et al. (2012). In this study, stakeholder collaboration entails the coordinated involvement of all relevant actors, including schools, government agencies, parents, and law enforcement, in preventing examination malpractice.

# Introduction...

## Background ...

### *Theoretical Perspective*

- ❑ Study was guided by **Deterrence Theory**, which posits that individuals are less likely to engage in deviant behavior if the perceived risks or consequences of such behavior are sufficiently high (Becker, 1968; Paternoster & Simpson, 1996).
- ❑ Theory is relevant in examining whether UNEB's strategies such as deployment of invigilators, increased surveillance, and legal penalties deter examination malpractice.
- ❑ Piquero and Pogarsky (2002), state that certainty, severity, and swiftness of sanctions are key dimensions that influence deterrence effectiveness.
- ❑ In Ugandan context, effectiveness of UNEB's punitive and preventative measures can thus be assessed within the framework of this theory.

# Introduction...

## Background ...

### *Theoretical Perspective*

- ❑ Study also draws on **Stakeholder Theory**, which emphasizes the role of multiple actors in organizational processes and outcomes.
- ❑ **Freeman (1984)**, who originally developed the theory, argued that interests of all stakeholders including those traditionally excluded from decision-making must be considered for successful governance.
- ❑ Exam security is not solely the responsibility of examination boards but a collective obligation of all education stakeholders.
- ❑ Stakeholders' involvement enhances transparency, accountability but also fosters a culture of shared responsibility and can contribute to mitigating malpractice (**Wamalwa & Burns, 2018**)



# Introduction

## *Contextual Perspective*

- ❑ In Uganda, Primary Leaving Examination is a high-stakes national examination that determines entry into secondary education.
- ❑ Administered by UNEB, PLE serves over 700,000 candidates annually across rural and urban areas.
- ❑ UNEB's mandate includes conducting valid, reliable, equitable and quality of learners' achievement.
- ❑ To combat enhance security & integrity of examination process, UNEB has implemented several measures including
  - use of randomized candidate numbers on examination scripts,
  - deployment of external invigilators and scouts,
  - increased stakeholder engagement initiatives,
  - surveillance of malpractice hotspots, and partnering with law enforcement agencies to monitor examination centers (Uganda Radio Network, 2024)
  - enactment the UNEB Act of 2021 which stipulates penalties such as fines up to 20 million Ugandan shillings or imprisonment for up to five years for offenders to deter malpractice. (UNEB, 2021).

# Introduction

## *Contextual Perspective ....*

- ❑ While significant strides have been made in combating examination malpractice, the country has witnessed a persistent rise in examination malpractice, particularly at PLE level.
- ❑ Examination malpractice in Uganda remains a significant challenge, despite the efforts of UNEB to curb the problem
- ❑ Over 1,200 suspected cases of malpractice are annually investigated, with offenses ranging from impersonation to use of technological devices (UNEB, 2023).
- ❑ This raise doubts about level of effectiveness of UNEB's strategies in curbing examination malpractice (Kisekka, 2024).
- ❑ Hence, contextual & evidence gaps inspired the study to assess the effectiveness of UNEB's current measures and to explore additional context-specific, sustainable approaches that may enhance the integrity of primary-level national examinations in Uganda.

# Introduction

## Statement of the Problem

- ❑ Ideally, national examinations in Uganda, particularly the PLE, are expected to be credible and reflective of students' actual learning achievements, guided by UNEB's policies and supported by the Education Act and Anti-Corruption Laws. In this ideal situation, rigorous security protocols, legal frameworks, and stakeholder sensitization should sufficiently prevent malpractice and promote examination integrity.
- ❑ However, in reality, examination malpractice remains a persistent challenge. Despite UNEB's adoption of enhanced security strategies such as coded examination papers, randomisation of candidate numbers, and deployment of external invigilators, cases of malpractice continue to be reported. The problem is further exacerbated by collusion among stakeholders, inadequate enforcement of punitive measures, and innovative cheating techniques. The magnitude of the problem is evident in UNEB's annual reports, which continue to show hundreds of malpractice cases, contributing to public distrust in national examinations.
- ❑ If these challenges are not addressed, the credibility of Uganda's education system risks being severely undermined, with far-reaching consequences on student motivation, workforce readiness, and national development. Conversely, a robust and transparent assessment process could restore public trust and ensure that academic qualifications are meritorious.
- ❑ No study has been done in Uganda to explore the effectiveness of the different strategies employed by UNEB to curb malpractice.
- ❑ Therefore, this study assessed the effectiveness of existing UNEB strategies and explore emerging, innovative solutions to curb examination malpractice at the PLE level.

# Introduction

## Study Purpose

- To to assess the effectiveness of strategies implemented by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) to curb examination malpractice in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) and to identify emerging strategies that can strengthen examination integrity in Uganda.

## Study Objectives

- To assess the effectiveness of current strategies implemented by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice in the PLE in Uganda.
- To identify persistent challenges undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies in curbing examination malpractice at PLE in Uganda.
- To explore innovations and strategies that can curb examination malpractice at PLE in Uganda.
- How effective are the current strategies employed by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice in the Primary Leaving Examinations?

## Research Questions

- What challenges undermine the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies in curbing examination malpractice at PLE?
- What emerging strategies or innovations can be used to curb examination malpractice at PLE in Uganda?

# Methodology

## Research Paradigm

- ❑ Study hinges on research paradigm of pragmatism which calls for use of methods best suited to a research problem (Saunders et al., 2019).
- ❑ All methods have limits; **QUAL & QUANT** approaches are **complementary**

## Research Design

- ❑ Employed a **convergent** parallel **mixed research design**
- ❑ Approach enabled triangulation of findings from different data sources, thereby enhancing the depth and breadth of analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).
- ❑ QUANT component provided statistical insights into the perceived effectiveness of UNEB's anti-malpractice strategies,
- ❑ QUAL component offered rich, contextual information from key informants, helped to explain underlying reasons for persistent malpractice despite these interventions.
- ❑ Mixed methods useful when evaluating policy-related issues & assessing multifaceted phenomena e.g. examination malpractice (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

# Methodology

## Research Paradigm

- ❑ Study hinges on research paradigm of pragmatism which calls for use of methods best suited to a research problem (Saunders et al., 2019).
- ❑ All methods have limits; **QUAL & QUANT** approaches are complementary

## Study population

- ❑ Respondents consisted of invigilators, area supervisors, UNEB officials, district monitors, head teachers, examiners and parents or guardians
- ❑ Key informants included SMC Representatives, DIS, Chief Examiners, NCDC & UNEB Subject Experts

# Methodology...

## Data Collection Methods

- ☐ Survey
- ☐ Key Informant Interviews
- ☐ Document Review

## Instruments

- ☐ ***Semi-Structured Questionnaires*** with closed-ended items measured on a Five-Likert scale to assess perceptions of the different stakeholders about the UNEB's strategies that are being used to curb examination malpractice.
- ☐ ***Key Informant Interview Guides*** were used during QUAL. data collection with key informants
- ☐ ***Document Review Checklist*** to analyze UNEB policy documents and reports

## Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

- ☐ QUANT strand, stratified three-stage cluster random sampling design were employed
- ☐ **At stage 1**, a sample of two (2) districts were randomly selected from each of 15 sub-regions, except for Kampala (31 districts.)
- ☐ **At stage 2**, 04 PLE Centres (clusters) were randomly selected from sampled 31 districts.
- ☐ **At stage 3**, randomly selected respondents from each of 124 sampled PLE Centres

# Methodology...

## Validity

- ☐ Tools were subjected to expert judgment for ace, construct and content validity
- ☐ CVI of' questionnaire items
- ☐ detailed and transparent documentation of the research processes Auditability (consistency)
- ☐ Details on study contexts to ensure applicability & transferability of findings.

## Reliability

- ☐ Development of items based on study objectives,
- ☐ Review of instruments by experts
- ☐ Piloting of tools - small group of respondents not included in main sample  
–Questionnaire was pre-tested, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.71, indicating acceptable reliability.
- ☐ Prior training of data collectors

## Credibility

- ☐Credibility of findings -Rich & thick verbatim extracts from participants,
- ☐Personal reflexivity & reflection on own perspectives
- ☐Audio recording for repeated revisiting of data to check emerging themes



# Methodology...

## Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Category of Respondents	Population Size(s)	Target Sample Size(s)	Sampling Techniques	Data Collection Method
Invigilators (33%)	50,000	720	Stratified Simple random	Survey
Head teachers at PLE Centres(10%)	207,238 <sup>a</sup>			
Examiners (8%)	15,859			
Parents or guardians (2%)	Over 1 million			
Area supervisors (21%)	500			
UNEB officials (15%)	36			
District monitors (12%)	176			
SMC Representatives	142,731 <sup>b</sup>	04	Purposive	Interviews
District/Municipal Inspectors of Schools	176	04	Purposive	Interviews
NCDC Subject Experts	04	04	Purposive	Interviews
Chief Examiners	04	04	Purposive	Interviews
UNEB Subject Officers	08	06	Purposive	Interviews

*a-UBOS (2022). Statistical Abstract.*

*b- SMC representatives were calculated based on 15,859 PLE Centres (UNEB, 2023)*

## Methodology

### *Data Analysis*

- ❑ QUAN. data collected was entered & analyzed using SPSS (*Vers. 21*).
- ❑ Data from questionnaires were coded, edited, and analyzed using using SPSS (*Vers. 21*).
- ❑ Descriptive statistics e.g. Frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were generated.
- ❑ Results are presented using tables, charts, and graphs to facilitate interpretation.
- ❑ For **QUAL. data, thematic analysis** was conducted using ATLAS.ti & QDA Miner softwares
- ❑ Findings from both data strands were then merged and interpreted concurrently, allowing for triangulation of results with **existing literature, confirmation and drawing conclusions**

# Methodology

## Ethical Considerations

- ☐ A letter of administrative clearance & ethical approval after successful review of research protocol & clearance from **ERC** were obtained before commencing the study.
- ☐ Respondents were informed about study purpose
- ☐ **Informed consent** of key informants was obtained prior to participation.
- ☐ Participants informed of **voluntary participation**, with the option to withdraw at any stage.
- ☐ Participants were assured of **confidentiality** and **anonymity**
- ☐ Field data was coded & analysed in a way that no identifying information could be **traced back** to research participants
- ☐ All field data were stored securely and used solely for study purposes

# Findings and Discussion

## *Objective 1: To assess the effectiveness of current strategies implemented by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice in the PLE*

*Table 1: Effectiveness of current strategies employed by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice*

Strategy	Mean Score	% Very Effective	% Effective	% Neutral	% Ineffective	% Very Ineffective
<i>Deployment of external personnel (invigilators, scouts, and district monitors)</i>	4.25	44.2	40.4	11.5	3.8	-
<i>Introduction of random numbers for examination papers</i>	4.50	59.6	32.7	5.8	1.9	-
<i>Military Police-led security at storage and distribution stations</i>	4.35	52.9	33.3	9.8	3.9	-
<i>Strict supervision procedures and rotation of invigilators</i>	4.22	39.2	47.1	9.8	3.9	-
<i>Use of sealed metallic containers and coded locks</i>	4.33	43.1	47.1	9.8	-	-
<i>Briefings using UNEB's Manual on the Conduct of Examinations</i>	4.02	33.3	39.2	23.5	3.9	-
<i>Clear penalties and prosecution under the UNEB Act 2021</i>	4.11	40.4	44.2	9.6	5.8	-
<i>Cancellation of exam results</i>	4.27	48.1	34.6	15.4	-	1.9
<i>Integrity-based theme campaigns (e.g., "Integrity and Security in Exam Management")</i>	3.84	38.5	23.1	25.0	11.5	1.9

# Findings and Discussion

**Objective 1: To assess the effectiveness of current strategies implemented by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice in the PLE...**

*Table 1: Effectiveness of current strategies employed by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice*

Strategy	Mean Score	% Very Effective	% Effective	% Neutral	% Ineffective	% Very Ineffective
<i>Teachers not invigilating in the schools where they teach</i>	4.19	40.4	44.2	9.6	5.8	-
<i>Declaration of conflict of interest by contracted professionals</i>	3.83	25.0	45.8	16.7	12.5	-
<i>Prohibition of swapping invigilators between centres</i>	3.92	30.8	42.3	15.4	11.5	-
<i>Proper identification of candidates by the head of centre and examination officials</i>	4.25	42.3	40.4	17.3	-	-
<i>Observing the recommended spacing between candidates</i>	4.06	27.5	54.9	13.7	3.9	-
<i>Restricting entry of unauthorised persons into the examination room</i>	4.41	51.9	38.5	7.7	1.9	-
<i>Thorough checking of candidates before entering examination rooms</i>	4.39	46.2	48.1	3.8	1.9	-
<i>Opening of question paper envelopes in the presence of candidates</i>	4.33	48.1	40.4	7.7	3.8	-
<i>Restricting all persons other than candidates from reading the questions</i>	4.45	51.0	43.1	5.9	-	-

# Findings and Discussion

**Objective 1: To assess the effectiveness of current strategies implemented by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice in the PLE...**

*Table 1: Effectiveness of current strategies employed by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice*

Strategy	Mean Score	% Very Effective	% Effective	% Neutral	% Ineffective	% Very Ineffective
<i>Sealing of scripts by invigilators in the examination room in the presence of candidates</i>	<b>4.40</b>	53.8	32.7	13.5	-	-
<i>Receiving and timely response to information forwarded by whistleblowers</i>	<b>3.87</b>	28.8	36.5	26.9	7.7	-
<i>Display of caution notices against examination malpractice in open places</i>	<b>4.00</b>	36.7	44.9	18.4	-	-
<i>Stakeholder engagement and briefings of Area Supervisors and DIS/DEOs</i>	<b>4.16</b>	39.2	41.2	15.7	3.9	-
<i>Continuous sensitisation of contracted professionals and the general public</i>	<b>4.19</b>	36.5	46.2	17.3	-	-
<i>Thorough briefing of candidates on the conduct of examinations</i>	<b>4.28</b>	42.3	46.2	9.6	1.9	-
<i>Publishing names of schools involved in examination malpractice</i>	<b>4.34</b>	50.0	40.4	5.8	1.9	1.9

# Findings and Discussion

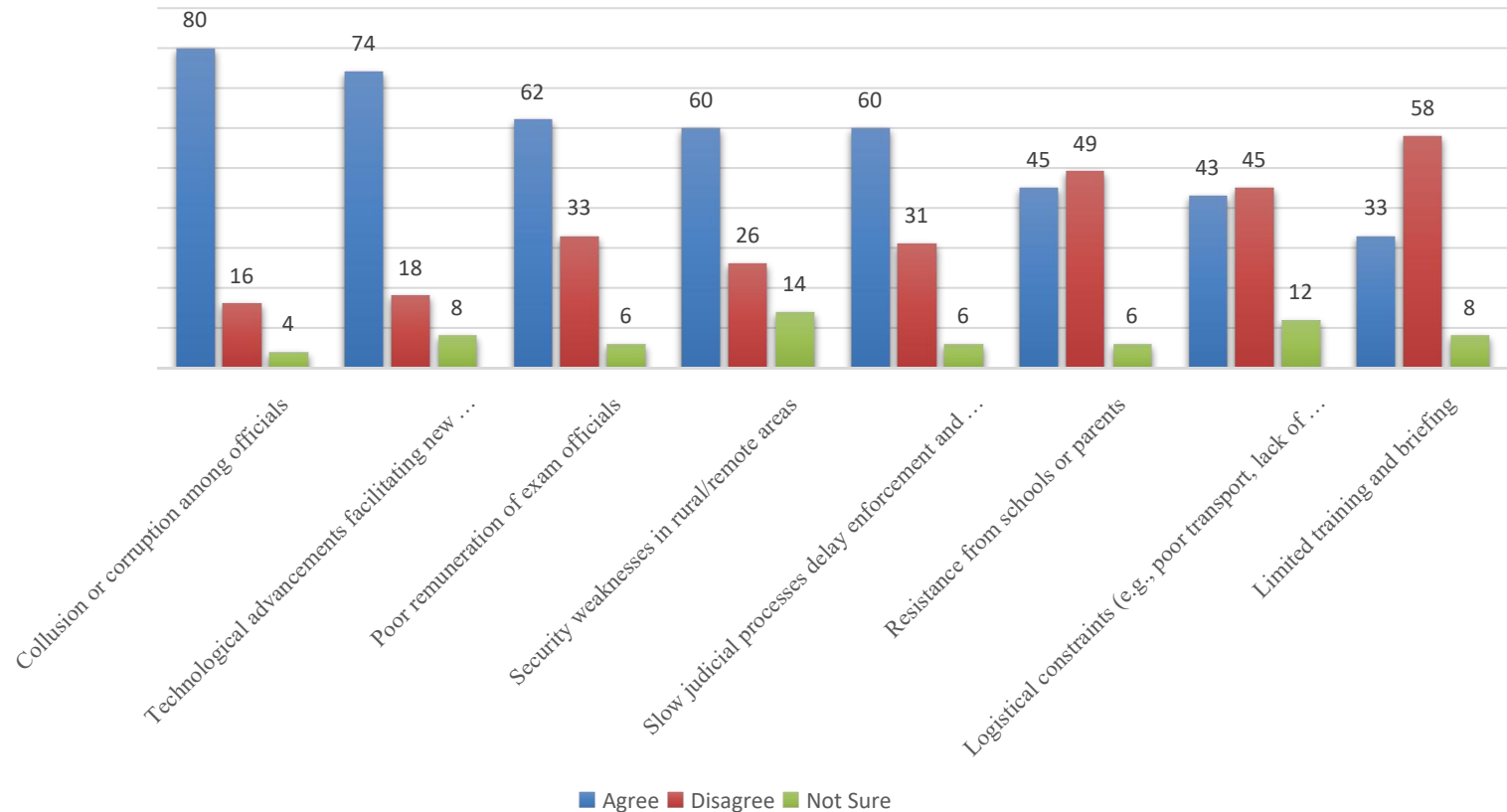
*Objective 1: To assess the effectiveness of current strategies implemented by UNEB in curbing examination malpractice in the PLE...*

- ❑ Majority of UNEB's measures to curb examination malpractice are perceived as effective, with several scoring high mean values ( $\geq 4.30$ )(**Highly Effective**)
- ❑ Strategies with mean scores between 4.00 and 4.29 were also regarded as effective by majority of respondents.
  - **Moderately Effective or Mixed Perceptions**
  - A small number of strategies received relatively lower mean scores, indicating either limited visibility, inconsistent implementation, or mixed perceptions of their impact
  - The lower ratings for these strategies which may reflect a lack of awareness or perceived ineffectiveness in implementation, suggesting the need for improved communication and operational reinforcement.
- ❑ Results suggest general confidence among stakeholders in UNEB's current efforts, particularly those targeting physical security, procedural control, and transparency

# Findings and Discussion

*Objective 2: To identify challenges undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies*

*Figure 1: Major challenges faced in the implementation of UNEB anti-malpractice measures*



- Findings highlight corruption, evolving cheating methods, & systemic enforcement issues as key barriers to addressing examination malpractice.



## Findings and Discussion

### *Objective 2: To identify challenges undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies...*

- ❑ Key barriers undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies were identified as corruption among officials and technological advances that facilitate new cheating methods, structural weaknesses in education and assessment systems, poor remuneration of examination officials, security weaknesses in rural areas and slow judicial processes hindering effective enforcement.
- ❑ Examination malpractice is not only a logistical or procedural issue but a deeply rooted moral and cultural problem.
- ❑ Concerns about corruption, particularly among politically connected schools, undermine public trust in the fairness of examination systems.
- ❑ UNEB's efforts may not be addressing the deeper moral and cultural issues at the heart of the malpractice problem.

# Findings and Discussion

## *Objective 2: To identify challenges undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies...*

- ❑ Findings from the participant's interview show that examination malpractice is not only a logistical or procedural issue but a deeply rooted moral and cultural problem. One participant pointed out, *"Malpractice is mainly a moral issue which can hardly be addressed by those measures."*
- ❑ Privatization of education in Uganda was cited as a complicating factor in the fight against examination malpractice. One respondent noted, *"Due to privatisation of education, some of the measures are ineffective because it is a business."* This reflects a concern that schools, especially private institutions, may be more focused on financial gain and reputation, which could lead to the undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's mitigation efforts.
- ❑ A UNEB (2024) study found that external assistance, copying, collusion, and smuggling of unauthorised materials are the most commonly perceived forms of malpractice at the PLE level.
- ❑ Main causes identified were societal pressure for high performance and lack of integrity among certain stakeholders. This makes the culprits to tamper with examination papers at the school level.
- ❑ Other contributing factors include inconsistent enforcement of penalties and inadequate invigilation and supervision were. Interestingly, the majority of respondents (68.6%) disagreed that poor understanding of UNEB regulations is a major cause, implying that many individuals engage in malpractice despite being fully aware of the rules. In contrast, more covert forms such as impersonation and substitution of scripts were less clearly acknowledged, with a high level of uncertainty reported regarding their occurrence.

# Findings and Discussion

## *Objective 2: To identify challenges undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies...*

- ❑ While UNEB's strategies are seen by many respondents as effective in theory, their practical application may be more challenging. This is further compounded by claims of bribery and corruption, with one responses asserting that,
  - *"It's always small schools that suffer those punitive measures, but giants always find their way out."*
  - *"Generally, it's effective,"* indicating that the measures, in principle, work but may lack consistency in their application and **greater transparency** and **accountability** regarding its internal processes to ensure fairness and trust in the system.
- ❑ Some respondents mentioned the difficulty of implementing certain strategies, such as swapping invigilators, which was described as a surface-level solution:
- ❑ Overall while UNEB's efforts may address the symptoms of malpractice, they do not tackle the underlying cultural and moral attitudes that facilitate such behaviour. For instance, some respondents noted that despite strict measures, culprits continue to find ways to bypass the system, as reflected in the statement, *"The strategies are effective but the culprits are ever inventing ways around them."* This is contrary to the deterrence theory which assumes that the Likelihood of being caught, severity and swiftness of the sanctions (Piquero & Pogarsky, 2002) could effectively curb examination malpractices.

# Findings and Discussion

## *Objective 3: To explore emerging strategies that can complement UNEB's current strategies in reducing malpractice*

- ❑ **Strengthening Policy Enforcement and Legal Framework:** Need to enforce existing laws, introduce harsher penalties against both individuals and institutions to deter malpractice and establish a specialized court to expedite malpractice case. The effectiveness of the legislation innovation is hampered by slow judicial processes, with many cases of malpractice remaining unresolved due to court delays. Some participants stated:

*"The examination centres should be withdrawn for good and no renewal."*

*"Publish the individuals involved in malpractice in media."*

*"Heavy punishments to schools that get involved in malpractice e.g. imprisonment" and "Increasing the fines to UGX 100 million" [30,000 US\$]."*

- ❑ **Reforming Deployment and Staffing Practices to address** lack of professionalism and the presence of conflicts of interest.

*"Deploy the secondary school teachers to manage the scouting and invigilating of PLE."*

*"Establish a centralised, merit-based deployment system managed independently by UNEB".*

This aligns with the recommendation by Onyibe, Umar, and Ibina (2015), who argue that engaging officers perceived as honest and trustworthy is key to curbing examination malpractice.

# Findings and Discussion

*Objective 3: To explore alternative or emerging solutions that can complement UNEB's current strategies in reducing malpractice*

## ❑ Improving Facilitation and Welfare of Examination Personnel

- *Careful selection and better compensation may reduce the likelihood of misconduct.*
- *When exam officials are poorly facilitated, they become more susceptible to influence and collusion. Also "Midday meals be provided to the candidates during exam time to avoid mixing with others."*
- Some participants emphasised the importance of deploying individuals of high integrity, with one remarking, *"UNEB should be intentional in selecting supervisors or invigilators other than leaving this to corrupt district officials."*

## ❑ Use of Technology tools and Surveillance for transparency and risk management

- *Can prevent examination materials being partially opened and leaked in transit especially between the storage stations and schools. as a tool for transparency and risk management.*
- Digital delivery: *"Electronic transmission of examinations to candidates to avoid access to exams in transit or at storage stations."*
- Surveillance within centres to deter on-site malpractice: *"Install cameras in all examination centres (halls or designated sitting areas)."*
- Addressing operational challenges and delays with more efficient systems and better coordination of examination delivery and collection (Nywar, 2016; Uganda Radio Network, 2024).
  - *"Ensure that examination packages are distributed using vehicles, not bodabodas, to minimise risks."*
  - *Use of software to track and filter examination personnel"*

# Findings and Discussion

*Objective 3: To explore alternative or emerging solutions that can complement UNEB's current strategies in reducing malpractice*

- ❑ **Curriculum and Assessment Reforms** and exam logistics.
- ❑ Participants also called for broader reforms in curriculum, assessment methods, and exam logistics. Many felt that the system encourages rote learning and performance pressure:
  - *"There is a need to go for competency-based curriculum in primary level to reduce on the level of cram work."*
  - *"Change examination tasks from content... to tasks that will require candidates to explain issues."*
- ❑ Competitive use of PLE results for marketing by schools was also criticised:  
*"Reforms on grading systems to discourage private schools and other schools that use exam results for adverts."* These responses show that structural weaknesses in the education and assessment systems can indirectly fuel malpractice
- ❑ **Transparency, unbiased regulatory Oversight, supervision and Monitoring** during the examination period:
  - *Others highlighted ongoing monitoring gaps: "Officials from UNEB to keep abrupt checks on the two days of PLE exams. "Strict time for picking up scripts and return of PLE scripts be observed."*
  - *Security was also mentioned as essential: "Deploying armed personnel to management centres within a given proximity especially where cases of malpractice are rampant."*
  - *Creation of shared examination centres: "Having one where all students in a given parish can sit for examination, to minimise cases of external assistance."*

# Findings and Discussion

*Objective 3: To explore alternative or emerging solutions that can complement UNEB's current strategies in reducing malpractice*

## □ **Community Engagement and Ethical Sensitisation**

- *Focus on ethics training of teachers, investigate contextual causes and community outreach reflects a recognition that malpractice is not only procedural, but also moral and social issue.*
  - *"Sensitisation of parents on the negative effects of exams malpractice on learners' future."*
  - *"UNEB Officers should visit the schools involved in malpractice and find out the causes on the ground."*
  - *"Teacher education at institutions should put a component or a unit with regard to quality assessment, supervision, transparency, self-control, truthfulness, and objectivity."*

# Conclusions & Recommendations

## Conclusions

- ❑ Overall, there was general consensus that UNEB has made significant progress in its efforts to combat examination malpractice but there is still significant room for improvement.
- ❑ While existing strategies e.g. result cancellations, imprisonment, and increased surveillance to combat examination malpractice are acknowledged as effective, stakeholders call for more stringent, and consistent enforcement of these measures to address emerging challenges coupled with a cultural shift towards greater ethical standards in education.
- ❑ With continued improvement in both policy and practice, examination malpractice can be significantly reduced in the future.
- ❑ Need for transparency, greater accountability in publication of cheating schools' names, overall management of the examination process and addressing operational challenges, such as delays in returning exam scripts



# Conclusions & Recommendations

## Conclusions

- ❑ Key barriers undermining the effectiveness of UNEB's strategies were identified as corruption among officials and technological advances that facilitate new cheating methods, structural weaknesses in education and assessment systems, poor remuneration of examination officials, security weaknesses in rural areas and slow judicial processes hindering effective enforcement.
- ❑ Examination malpractice is not only a logistical or procedural issue but a deeply rooted moral and cultural problem.
- ❑ Concerns about corruption, particularly among politically connected schools, undermine public trust in the fairness of examination systems.
- ❑ UNEB's efforts may not be addressing the deeper moral and cultural issues at the heart of the malpractice problem.

# Conclusions & Recommendations

## Conclusions

❑ **Alternative or emerging measures that can complement UNEB's current strategies in reducing malpractice include:**

- strengthening the policy and legal framework through the enforcement of existing laws and the introduction of harsher penalties to deter malpractice;
- reforming deployment and staffing practices through a centralized, merit-based system managed independently by UNEB;
- improving the facilitation and welfare of examination personnel;
- integrating technology to support digital delivery, monitor and vet examination personnel, and enhance surveillance through installation of cameras at examination centres to deter on-site malpractice;
- establishing more efficient systems and better coordination in the logistics of examination delivery and script collection;
- implementing broader reforms in curriculum and assessment methods; creating shared examination sitting centres;
- enhancing transparency, oversight, and monitoring;
- promoting community engagement; and integrating ethics into teacher education.

# Recommendations

## ❑ Enhancing Remuneration and Integrity Checks of Examination Officials

- *UNEB should improve the pay and benefits of all examination officials involved in the PLE process such as scouts and invigilators, and ensure that only individuals with proven track record of integrity are selected for sensitive roles in the examination process. This can also include regular evaluations of officials to assess their performance and commitment to the examination process.*

## ❑ Strengthening Monitoring and Enforcement Mechanisms

- *Ensure robust monitoring systems by deploying more examination officials, particularly those with a proven track record of integrity and the consistent application of penalties for all parties involved in malpractice.*
- *This includes implementing stricter enforcement of timelines and penalties, particularly for complicit officials including, head teachers, and district inspectors of officers.*
- *Enhance transparency and accountability by publicly naming and shaming schools and individuals found guilty of malpractice, regardless of their size or political connections.*

## ❑ Reforming deployment and staffing practices

- *Political influence was seen as undermining the integrity of the examination process, particularly in deployment of examinations officials and handling of malpractice cases.*
- *UNEB should take full control over the process by establishing a centralized and independently managed merit-based system to remove political interference in especially in sensitive areas such as the appointment of invigilators and investigation of malpractice cases.*
- *Regular review of processes is important even when they have worked for continued improvement of the examination processes.*

# Recommendations

## ❑ Community engagement and Public Awareness

- *UNEB should increase sensitization campaigns aimed at all stakeholders, including School Management Committees (SMCs), parents, teachers, & students, to highlight the importance of maintaining academic integrity and the detrimental effects of malpractice and societal values.*

## ❑ Integrating digital or technological tools in examination security

- *Modernise examination delivery and script collection through secure transportation methods, advanced monitoring systems such as biometric verification and digital surveillance at examination centres and enhanced vetting of examination personnel to improve the detection and prevention of malpractice.*
- *However, more contextual feasibility studies on technological models, such as digital invigilation tools, are needed.*

## ❑ Curriculum and assessment reforms at all education levels

- *MoES should shift from a content-based to a competency-based curriculum that focuses on practical application rather than rote memorisation at the primary level.*
- *Introducing continuous assessment, instead of waiting for a one-off examination at the end of the seven-year primary cycle, could reduce the incentive for malpractice.*

## ❑ Collaboration with the Judiciary

- *Examinations bodies should work closely with the judiciary to ensure that cases of examination malpractice are fast-tracked and receive thorough judicial scrutiny.*
- *Establishing a specialized court dedicated to handling examination malpractice cases is necessary to expedite resolution, ensure offenders are held accountable promptly, and reinforce the law's deterrent effect.*
- *A more efficient legal and judicial process would help deter potential offenders and send a strong message that malpractice will not be tolerated.*
- *There is need for empirical appraisal of their feasibility, challenges, and projected legal or educational outcomes within Uganda's legal and educational frameworks.*



*Thank you for listening attentively*