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**EXPLORING EXAMINATIONS DISHONESTY  
AMONG REFUGEE STUDENTS IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DADAAB,  
KENYA**

**OCHAN ROBERT LEOMOI**

*Graduate of the Master of Education, York University Borderless  
Higher Education for Refugees Program*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Executive Summary</u>	3
<u>1. Introduction</u>	4
<u>2. Discussion of Literature</u>	9
<u>3. Methodology</u>	13
<u>3.1 Recruitment and data collection</u>	13
<u>3.2 Participants</u>	14
<u>3.3 The researcher's relationship with the research community</u>	15
<u>4. Findings and Discussion</u>	16
<u>4.1 The Why of Dishonesty</u>	16
<u>4.2 Guilty or Innocent: A Few Thoughts</u>	18
<u>4.3 Local Examinations: Preparations for National Examinations</u>	20
<u>4.4 WUSC Scholarship: Life Gained or Lives Lost?</u>	20
<u>4.5 Change the Model of Examinations</u>	22
<u>4.6 Involve Primary School Stakeholders to Address Examination Dishonesty</u>	23
<u>5. Conclusion</u>	24
<u>6. Recommendations</u>	26
<u>Works Cited</u>	29

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper is a modified version of a Major Research Paper for the Master of Education degree at York University as part of the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees project, which provides virtual education to refugees in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya. Across the globe, education remains the track which everyone follows in search for success in life socially, economically and politically. Many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa design their curricula to include academic assessment at the end of a planned period to measure how much learning has been achieved.

## **My research project studied the Kenyan national examinations to find out why students in secondary schools in the Dadaab refugee camps engage in examination dishonesty**

I asked questions about those who organize such dishonesties and whether study participants had ideas about ways to reduce such dishonesties in secondary schools within refugee camps. Interviews were conducted with five participants: three teachers and two students. The research found that due to anxiety, students in secondary schools engage in unethical practices during examination sessions. Further, exam invigilators together with security personnel who are in control of examination centers receive bribes, which are commonly termed “pocket money.” Consequently, students freely gain access to examination questions prior to the official scheduled date or students are permitted to freely discuss the questions and share answers. Interview data also shows that exam dishonesty happens because students want to further their studies and gain entry into higher education institutions. Participants also claimed that there is marginalization of their region by the national examination council and dishonesty is seen as one solution. The research also found that the security of national examinations is at risk because the information about examinations is normally released by the same examining body then the beneficiaries spread it. Such unethical advancement has become a classic behaviour and every candidate perceives that it is part of a normal culture that should be practiced at every grade level. In view of these findings, this paper makes several recommendations. I propose that education stakeholders have to consider allocating sufficient money for examinations so that the people responsible, including security personnel, are well paid to avoid receiving pocket money from the field. In relation to teacher salaries for both refugee and host communities, UNHCR and the government should increase teachers’ salaries so that they can concentrate on instilling into learners the required knowledge which is stipulated in the syllabus.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

There are several documents that have been written on education in the Dadaab refugee encampment. These documents mainly discuss the issues of the refugee influx and education needs, such as classroom structures, trained teachers and learning resources. Very few of these documents highlight the following areas that are mentioned in this paper:



**(a) how education was established in Dadaab refugee camps,**



**(b) the transition to 8-4-4 Kenya National Curriculum (a form of learning in which a learner spends eight years in primary education, four years in a secondary institution, and four years towards a university degree), and**



**(c) the nullification of examination results as a consequence of examination dishonesty within refugee learning institutions.**

The main concern of this paper is to examine the process of how academic ethics are breached, which is an occurrence usually found during examination exercises as directed by the national curriculum.

All over the world, students are required to put much effort to understand the contents of lessons, and to complete all the academic tasks assigned by their teachers. It is important for students to complete these exercises because it helps the teacher to identify weak areas in their academic progress. The teacher, in turn, designs assignments in order to facilitate learning and assess students' academic progress. In Kenya, the fruit of hard work in learning institutions is typically harvested at the end of the year when every learner in all grade levels sits for summative examinations that are used to evaluate his or her level of understanding of the formal curriculum content.

Examinations are also used as a measuring tool for promoting students to the next grade. At the end of high school, these examinations are used to determine those who can move on to post-secondary education, usually colleges and universities.

In Dadaab refugee camps, especially Ifo refugee camp where I reside, the examination process has been upheld since the establishment of schools in 1993. In the beginning, private schools in Dadaab refugee camps did not have a specific curriculum to guide their activities until the introduction of the Kenyan National curriculum in the area in 1998 that directs learning for eight years in primary education and four years in a secondary institution before proceeding to university to take courses for another four years, after which the student graduates with the first degree.

This is known as the 8-4-4 Kenyan curriculum. Under the sponsorship of UNICEF, formal education flourished in the camps from the onset of this curriculum. This success paved the way for Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere to take over the responsibility of implementing educational activities within the Dadaab refugee camps. This organization managed education until 2010, when it surrendered the management to the African Development and Emergency Organization, one of the local organizations, which only operated for two years within Ifo camp. At the time of publishing, education in the camps was being managed by the Lutheran World Federation, which took over education services from Islamic Relief Kenya in 2018. Unlike Islamic Relief Kenya and the African Development and Emergency Organization, which operated only in one camp, Lutheran World Federation manages teaching and learning activities in all three refugee camps in Dadaab. This management shift is the effect of financial constraint in donor funding that opened an exit gate for some organizations. The agencies that have left Dadaab include the Refugee Education Trust, whose objective was to educate those learners who did not qualify for admission in post-primary institutions and school dropouts.

When I joined the teaching profession in 1998, the same year in which the 8-4-4 Kenyan curriculum was introduced to the refugee learning institutions, schools in the camps did not have specified guidelines to organize learning activities. All learning centres simply used textbooks, which were mainly brought by UNICEF from Somalia. Lesson objectives were not oriented by a structured curriculum.

However, after the introduction of the Kenyan National Curriculum, the direction of education became clear to refugees when the first cohort, comprising ten students who did the Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education examinations, excelled and were admitted into Garissa County High School. This was the only high school in Garissa County at the time which agreed to educate refugee children. In the year 2000, the first high school was opened in Ifo. There was a great deal of transparency in education and in the examination system of that time within the refugee camps.



**However, starting in 2002, students became less prepared for examinations and I began to witness the learners' dishonesty in their school-based examinations. Students would copy by peeping from their neighbours or swap their answer sheets for help.**

Initially, as a teacher, I did not think that this exam dishonesty was a serious issue. Nevertheless, year after year it became apparent that more and more students started engaging in this academic dishonesty at different grade levels.



This problem increased to the point where in 2010, the Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education results for Abdul-Aziz, Halane and Midnimo primary schools were cancelled as a consequence of examination malpractices.

National examination dishonesty is found in schools across East Africa as well as within Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya and has become a yearly routine despite stern rules put in place by the education ministries. This problematic practice has often led to subsequent cancellations of examination results for many secondary schools in Kenya, including those in refugee camps.



**In 2013, Ifo Secondary School felt the pinch of the examination rules when the Kenya National Examination Board cancelled the results of 133 out of 144 registered candidates comprising 125 boys and 8 girls.**

However, 11 male candidates were discerned to be free from academic dishonesty and the best three received World University Service of Canada (WUSC) scholarships to further their studies in Canada.

When comparing the number of girls to boys in high schools who sit for national examinations, a great gap is evident in the above case of Ifo Secondary in 2013. This variation suggests girls are not given the freedom to access further studies through formal education. A blog post published by the World Bank on education for girls in Tanzania informs us that girls in that country are often married at the age of fifteen years before completing their studies in higher grade levels (Wodon and Nabeta 2019). When we critically look into this issue, we can understand that child marriage leads to dropping out of schools and opens the gate to the unforeseen future of a child mother. The authors also noted the following key points which are believed to coerce girls out of school:



(1) At the home level, girls are perceived to be domestic labourers and their production must be felt by the family members.



(2) In a family that earns a living below one dollar, girls are used as sources of income. In most cases, they

are coerced into child labour, early marriages and in some instances they are induced to engage in immoral practice (sex working) which is above their age.



(3) When the parents cannot afford to pay for their daughter's school fees, they intend to minimize a girl's

education dream. Yet, those who continue to pursue their studies occasionally miss classes because of domestic chores, which leads to persistent absenteeism.



(4) When a girl lives with a single or step parent, any other activity contrary to family interest is never

entertained within that home perimeter. Such are the cases which influence the number of girls in schools to be lower than boys.

In 2017, examination results of 100 boys and 10 girls out of 140 registered Form Four candidates from Towfiq Secondary School in Ifo refugee camp were disqualified. Nevertheless, 4 girls and 26 boys among the registered candidates were found to have been honest during the examinations. As an educator, I have noticed that students in refugee camps find it difficult to concentrate on their learning activities.



**Every year, some of the prospective candidates both in primary and secondary schools who prepare to sit for national examinations are said to collect a huge amount of money and use it to weaken invigilators' ethics so that examination dishonesty can occur unfettered.**

The trend and the impacts of examination dishonesty are quite puzzling because, as my data will later show, schools plan for this dishonest practice.

In relation to educational achievement, lots of misconceived ideas had been circulating that males are brighter than their female counterparts, therefore, female students are most likely to act unethically. However, the study conducted by Wood (2012) asserted that the academic success of female students does not depend on the failure of male students or on dishonesty. Further, Wood asserts that there is almost no gap in college entry because the enrolment rate after high school is more or less equal. As will be shown later, Wood's assertions support some statements by my study participants regarding academic malpractices among students of both genders.

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My research study was designed to examine the validity of my observations about academic dishonesty and its impact on the declining integrity of education within the refugee camps in Dadaab. Although unconfirmed, I also observed that students' lack of concentration in school may result in scenarios where they cannot express their thoughts both in written and spoken English. This challenge may ignite frustration and aggression, thus causing them to be chaotic and to misbehave, which may include cheating in tests and exams. Regrettably, at the primary level, students are moved to the next grades without attaining the desired knowledge and skills that the curriculum expects of them. Within this group, those who are admitted to secondary schools usually drop out of school in the second year. Some are found to lack reading and writing skills despite their placement at high school. This issue is partially because of faulty promotion of students to the next grade, which has created an avenue for school dropout.

In the first term of 2019, a secondary school in Dadaab had some fourth year students who could not write what the teacher dictated nor could they read a sentence in English. For this matter, the school principal with the help of the students' parents regulated that they be placed to Form 2 classes.



**That same year, the above school went further and established a rule which states that whoever is found guilty of breaching academic conduct during examinations must bring one rim of printing paper as a penalty and will have his or her answer sheet confiscated.**

Since obtaining printing paper in the camps is difficult and costly, the school viewed it as an appropriate and learning-oriented punishment for offenders. The rule affected some students, mainly those in first year, because they were dishonest in history, Christian Religious Education, Biology and Chemistry examination papers. Each student had to pay a penalty of a rim of printing paper. Considering that this is an issue which is negatively influencing the ethics of our future leaders, as opposed to going with rumors, I aimed to find data that would solidly explain the causes and implications of examination dishonesty in the Dadaab refugee camps.

With the help of the participants the following guiding research questions were answered:

- **Why do students in the Dadaab refugee camps engage in examination dishonesty?**
- **Who organizes examination dishonesty in secondary schools within the refugee camps?**
- **Are there ways to reduce examinations dishonesty?**





## 2.DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE

Nyamwange, Ondima and Onderi (2013) noted that school examinations are the instruments which educators use to determine the proficiency of learners in schools across various disciplines globally. Onger (2009) indicates that examinations help to elevate students through the promotion of different learning capacities, which will be relevant for employment opportunities after completing their studies. For courses to be honoured and validated, academic ethics are integral to operation of education and must be the core value of learning institutions. The debates about the role and nature of examinations and related ethical implications in education are broad. There are some who see examinations as core to the process of education.

Others however, see examinations as loaded with contradictions and as limited in the way that learners are asked to demonstrate knowledge. According to Taradi, Knežević, & Đogaš (2010), knowledge is only achieved when academic beneficiaries interact responsibly with course materials such that the result of their interactions is positively realized and welcomed in the society. In addition, the authors maintained that academic integrity is the foundation on which trust is built, especially for professional employment.



**Further, they noted that examination malpractices are the origin of corruption in any functional unit because students who**

**practice examination dishonesty will incorporate it in their lifestyles and it becomes their habit.**

In many countries, examinations start at the elementary level and run through high school, colleges and tertiary institutions as the apex of formal learning. Consequently, the end result of testing students' academic ability is that it creates anxiety among learners (Hauptman 2002). Anxiety may lead to other behavior, including examination dishonesty, which in turn results in corrupt future leaders (Akaranga 2013). Wilayat (2009) and Fasasi (2006) described such academic misconduct as an intended dishonest act, and therefore, the players in the academic malpractices do not deserve to be accorded any academic respect. Likewise, Lin and Wen (2007) in their report noted that academic dishonesty among high school students in Taiwan rose to 61.72%. They asserted that students applied various unethical means to attain the desired qualification.

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Scholars in this case identified male students as the major players in examinations dishonesty compared to their female counterparts and that the first year students in the university lead in this dishonest act. There is a similar story in secondary school, which is the focus of my research.

Exploring these debates about dishonesty is important because it has serious implications on the integrity of education delivered to people living in refugee camps. Oduor (2018) in his news article reflected on the concern of the Kenya National Examination Council top officers who sent an academic irregularity warning to twenty schools in the 2018 national examinations in Kenya.

The officers reiterated that attempts to cheat on examinations would amount to closing down the centres and their leaders would be interdicted. Professor Magoha highlighted two schools in particular in Garissa County who planned dishonesty in cooperation with parents in order to tarnish the image of the national examinations. A related concern is noted by Saunders (1993) who recommended that if students give out the assignments to be done by someone else on their behalf and they only wait to submit completed work, it is plagiarism. Bribing the examination supervisor so that there should not be tough supervision, as well as copying and pasting the information from another work to secure interest advancement, are other examples of academic dishonesty.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, research results demonstrate that several learners participate in dishonesty during examinations (Nyamwange et al. 2013; Mituka 2001). Researchers continue to document increasing numbers of candidates who admit to have participated in examination dishonesty. These researchers show that examination irregularities are common, not only just in Kenya, but also in other countries like Uganda, Tanzania, and Nigeria. In Kenya, Nyamwange et al. (2013) articulated that about

**80 %** of students who qualify to pursue higher studies and

**75 %** of undergrads conceded having unethically done their examinations.

Siringi, 2009

In addition, Anderman and Midgley (2000) revealed that the rate of academic dishonesty has been increasing since 1950. Nyamwange et al. (2013) supports Kiogotho's (2009) argument that about 21% of students who say examination dishonesty is awful are the very culprits of academic dishonesty. In fact, over 60% of the students in Kenyan learning institutions conceded having duped the examiners (Nyamwange et al. 2013).

All this research confirming the existence of examination dishonesty leads to my central research question:

**if academic dishonesty is not acceptable to many, then why is it widely practiced in many learning institutions?**



In his article, Grimes (2004) asserted that a great number of students suggested that the phenomenon of examination fraud be accepted as part of the learning system. While referring to (Crown and Spiller 1998) report on business students, Grimes reiterated that good number of students participate in cheating during their university learning in business studies.

Others report that academic dishonesty is somehow condoned by the law in that it is not explicitly put as something worth serious punishment. For instance, in its September 23rd 2016 edition, The Monitor reported a claim made by the Uganda National Examination Board. The Board stated that the 1980 examination law that governs academic exercises in Uganda is so mild that culprits of examination dishonesty do not feel the pain of the law.

However, and somewhat not surprisingly, on February 7th, 2018, Soft Power News reported that the Board withheld over 4500 ordinary level examinations results from 62 secondary schools across the nation.

For decades, examination dishonesty has been a concern for many Ugandan officials. For example, Kiwanuka (2010) noted the concern of the Uganda Inspector General of Government, Mr. Raphael Baku, who claimed that the future of Ugandan civil servants will squarely lie in the hands of unscrupulous employees. He foresaw the country's destiny from the way academic assessments were undermined and the manner in which young children were indirectly drilled to become dishonest future leaders.

Similarly, McCabe, Feghali and Abdallah (2008), acknowledging an earlier argument by Magnus, Polterovich, Danilov, and Savvateev (2002), stated that

**to some extent, corruption in government offices have roots in examination dishonesty, which forms obstacles to competency, accountability and trust in government. When learners do examinations unethically, they are unable to innovatively manage civil servant offices.**

This academic malpractice has also been prevalent in Tanzania. The report by Tanzania's Citizen News (October 2nd, 2018) indicates that the National Examination Council of Tanzania disqualified eight primary schools' national examination results in Dodoma, Dar es Salaam, and Mwanza regions after an investigation confirmed that there were irregularities in the exercise. Consequently, all top district education officers in Chemba District were interdicted by Tixon Nzunda the Deputy Permanent Secretary in the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government of Education. Those officers were ordered to wait for further steps which are guided by the Tanzania Education Act. Later, Xinhua News agency (October 28th, 2018) shed light on the fate of forty-six Tanzanian education officials who were forcefully sent home on account of aiding academic misconduct. Related to this event, the results of 110 primary schools were withheld. Relatedly, Mary Ramadhani (October 3rd, 2018) on a Tanzania Broadcasting Cooperation interview with the National Examination Council of Tanzania Executive Secretary, Dr. Charles Msonde, informed the nation that all candidates from Dar es Salaam, Dodoma and Mwanza were to redo their national examinations since the outcome of their previous examinations was disqualified because of irregularities, which were detected during the marking process.

The strange news here is that teachers and head teachers who spend the whole day with learners are discovered to be actively involved in academic dishonesty at the highest order, according to Xinhua News agency's report from October 28th, 2018.

Xinhua News' report noted that top education authorities and examination center supervisors participate in dishonest learning assessment.

**When we read the media, we may think that it is only teachers and students who do not follow academic ethics. The fact is, academic dishonesty is practiced in many countries by all parties from students, to teachers, to invigilators, to school inspectors, and to examination councils.**

Likewise, in Masaba and Migori districts of Kenya in 2008, instances of dishonesty on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exams were reported. The 2018 result was announced on December 21st, 2018 by the education cabinet secretary Amina Mohamed who noted that due to academic dishonesty, the results of 100 candidates were disqualified. Some students, teachers, and security officers were tracked and apprehended during the 2018 examination investigation. Examination dishonesty appears to be a wide problem within the education sector in many Sub-Saharan countries while the major players may as well include education executives. While there are numerous reports on teachers and education officials engaged in dishonesty, I was interested in learning more about students' practices, their views about dishonesty as well as hearing students' suggestions about ways to change this rampant behaviour, especially in refugee camps. In the following section, I present the methods used to hear students' voices about examination dishonesty, which is later followed by a section presenting data analysis and discussion.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

Before recruiting participants, I contacted friends for advice on the site for my research because I know that the refugee community is aware of examination dishonesty, which is common in primary and secondary schools. My choice to take a secondary school in one of the Dadaab refugee camps was motivated by the following factors. First, the school had established popularity and overall reputable exam performance from the year it was established. Second, as will be discussed later, there exists an interesting teacher-learner relationship that makes the institution become the centre of interest. Finally, the school had experienced the cancellation of national examination results in a year not very distant from the time of my data collection. These three points made me develop interest to know the relationship between performance and the cancellation of the results.

I booked an appointment with the school principal with whom I shared my research intention in the school. After explicit introduction to the school principal, I was granted permission to carry out my academic research in the secondary school of my interest. I wanted to collect data from both teachers and students, but I did not know who could be the best participants for my research interviews.

I therefore requested help from the school principal to identify the participants using the categories of a refugee teacher and a national teacher from the same high school and two students, while considering gender balance.

This identification was done as requested, except for the teachers who were all male because the school has not yet considered employing refugee female teachers. Though I wanted one of the administrators to take part in the interview, the principal excused the administrator's office and therefore none of them participated.

Some pieces of information were required from both current and alumni male and female students of the high school. I therefore stepped forward to identify the alumni since I knew most of them. After explaining my intention to them, one of the two approached alumni declined to take part in the interview for fear of the nature of the topic. Out of the seven projected participants, I interviewed five who gave me rich information about my research topic. With permission from the participants, I recorded their voices during the face to face interviews. From my observations, the students who participated in the interview were not open enough to give detailed information. It was as if they were briefed on what to say and what not to say. Though these student participants confirmed that there is examination dishonesty, both of them declined to explain the manner in which this dishonesty happens.

## 3.2 PARTICIPANTS

### STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonyms	Gender	Role
Imrab	Male	Teacher
Yeqlab	Female	Teacher
Atany	Male	Teacher
Demah	Male	Student
Karamu	Female	Student

#### Imrab



Imrab (pseudonym), is a male teacher in his early thirties. At the time of the interview, he had been teaching science subjects and technology at the secondary school level for over five years. From the beginning of his employment, he used different teaching approaches in order to enhance understanding of the curriculum. He spoke about his effort to produce many untrained teachers who are currently serving the children in different primary and secondary schools within the Dadaab encampment. He stated that different forms of examination dishonesty are practiced in the school he attended as a student and at his current school where he works. He claimed not to have ever engaged in examination dishonesty when he was a student.

#### Yeqlab



Yeqlab is a 23-year-old primary school female teacher who has been teaching language and sciences for two years. She is aware of examination irregularities in her school of work and at the high school that she attended as a student. Further, she stated that she herself cheated during examinations when she was at high school.

#### Atany



Atany is a high school teacher in his early thirties who specializes in coaching English as a foreign language. Atany had been teaching in different schools in Dadaab for five years. Atany is a committed teacher who follows every student's attendance and realized that the number of daily attendees is lower than the registered students in the class, thus leading to dishonesty. He claimed to have attempted cheating during an examination but was not successful because he wasted too much time trying to not get caught.

#### Demah



Demah is a 19-year-old male student who has been learning in this institution since his first year of secondary school. Demah had already started to prepare for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations. He noted that examination dishonesty is practised by many students. However, he claimed to have never engaged in examination dishonesty.



## Karamu



Karamu is a 20-year-old female student who has attended the same high school since her first year of secondary education. According to her responses during the interview, she is a student who does not think or plan for examination dishonesty. She believes any form of academic irregularity is cheating which does not mold anyone to become a good and reliable person. Therefore, she concentrates on reading in order to pass examinations and claims to have never engaged in examination dishonesty.

### 3.3 THE RESEARCHER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

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I have been living in Ifo refugee camp for twenty-five years, since 1995. My relationship with the community around me is very good despite my religious, cultural and national differences. I am labeled a minority within the refugee camp because I am a Christian and Ugandan, while the majority is Muslim and Somali. As a survival strategy within the refugee set-up, in 1998 I knocked on the door of the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere organization to seek a job opportunity. Even though I was just a high school graduate, the organization employed me as an untrained teacher who at that time was grouped among the few knowledgeable persons in Ifo refugee camp. With the knowledge that was resonating from my primary and secondary school teachers, my approach to teaching attracted a lot of learners to my teaching and many would express desire to have me teach their classes.

My free interaction with the community as an elementary teacher made it easy for me to identify the participants from amongst the alumni of the secondary school who could meaningfully answer my research questions. I know that the community here does not entertain deceit because of religion, so I spoke honestly about my research intentions and allowed potential participants to decide whether or not they wanted to be part of my study. That is how I ended up with only one alumnus as participant.

**I picked this research topic because the speculations about how students move up and down in search for money to mobilize themselves for the national examinations were really worrisome. As will be seen later, my research revealed that the urge to indulge in examination malpractices challenges students' economic status.**

My research topic was nearly thwarted because education officers were agitated when I raised the issue of examination dishonesty. Considering the speculations I had hinted upon about students' contributions and the anxiety exhibited by the NGO officials present in the symposium hall confirmed to me that there were more facts to be discovered. Despite the call from some local BHER officers to change my topic, partly because of fear that employers would accost school managers and threaten their jobs, I developed a strong interest to know the unknown and to uncover that which was being protected. Despite these and other challenges, with the help of the school principal, my data collection was successful.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first step of the analysis was to read the data for commonalities and differences amongst participants' responses. In the second step of my analysis, I identified the themes that conceptually answer the research questions.

The main themes are:

(i)

**Local and National Examinations**

(ii)

**Collect money for examinations**

(iii)

**Attain WUSC scholarship**

(iv)

**Change model of examinations**

(v)

**Mass cheating**

(vi)

**Involve primary schools in addressing cheating**

### 4.1 THE WHY OF DISHONESTY

When participants were asked why students engage in examination dishonesty they offered varied responses. Atany, Demah and Karamu had similar views and stated that students who engage in examination irregularities are ill-prepared for the exams because of absenteeism or lack of confidence to do better in the national examinations. Yeqlab and Imrab speculated that the north-eastern region of Kenya is normally stereotyped by the examinations board, thus causing the entire region to fail in examinations every year.

**That is, Yeqlab and Imrab stated that the examinations board under-marks the national examinations of this region. They said that since irregularity starts from the examination board itself, students sometimes view that it is better to "sit on the law" (to not follow the rules) and score a reasonable grade than to be loyal and fail in the examinations.**

This claim about stereotyping that results in "under-marking" of the region's students deserves further research because nothing has been validated or disproved about it.



Imrab and Yeqlab also stated that the irregularities in national examinations within the Dadaab refugee camps aim at a WUSC scholarship, which is offered to those students who perform better in their secondary school examinations. Such a reward causes anxiety among students, because each candidate wants to benefit from the WUSC opportunity. This assertion is in line with the conclusions of the report by the OECD (2017), which was conducted in Ukraine about the impact of rewards and punishment on students' behaviour. The report asserts that in Ukraine, introduction of gold and silver medal incentives given to school leavers resulted in the increase of students who qualified to join higher education institutions from 6.2% in 2010 to 8% by 2014.



**To a certain degree in my view as a researcher, the WUSC scholarship in Dadaab can be seen as a negative incentive because it induces exam dishonesty, though it acts as a reward to those who do well and disregards the low-performing in examinations.**

The reasons here are that the chance to meet such an opportunity is so minimal with concentrated competition where only high grades are considered eligible and then the scholarship also acts as an academic method to resettle a young generation in Canada. In this scenario therefore, a student has to apply all the possible ways to qualify for WUSC scholarship. Imrab recalled how he put much effort to educate his students for the betterment of their future but they could not engage in the critical learning for development.

Instead, students would only trade on academic dishonesty, which is not the target of teachers who spend the whole day analyzing the expectations of the national curriculum. Imrab narrated how his school came up with the strategy of curbing academic dishonesty among learners and within the institution itself. He noted the effects of the organization when they introduced the zonal tests which are conducted three times each term. Teaching staff tried to minimize misconduct during these testing sessions.

Tembo secondary school created an examination rule which dictates that any student found culpable for academic malpractice must compensate the misconduct with a rim of printing paper and the particular examination paper is confiscated as a penalty. Imrab could not comment on the national examinations because according to him, the Kenya Education Act (CAP 211 of 2012) dictates that refugee teachers are not entitled to oversee national examination activities because they are not registered with Teachers Service Commission (the body that licenses and employs teachers in Kenya).

## 4.2 GUILTY OR INNOCENT: A FEW THOUGHTS

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When asked whether they have ever engaged in examination dishonesty, only one participant, Yeqlab, responded in the affirmative. Three participants, Imrab, Demah and Karamu responded that they never participated in the act while Atany stated that he tried to cheat but he couldn't because he spent too much time watching if the invigilator could see him. Yeqlab, a female teacher in her early twenties recalled how, together with her classmates, engaged in examination irregularities during her high school days. She stated that they would form a group and contribute five thousand Kenya shillings (an equivalent of fifty US Dollars) each, to lure all persons responsible to oversee examinations.

“

With the power of money, we acted unfairly and gained access to examinations papers earlier than the time. - **Yeqlab**

”

The question papers were given to the competent persons who would work out the answers and send them to circulate among the students in all the examination rooms.

The contribution exercise starts as early as immediately after registering for the national examinations, when students normally organize meetings to hatch the amount to be contributed per candidate.

The first meeting is to decide the amount to be contributed for the bribe and choose officials who comprise the two gender-balanced Chairpersons, secretary, two treasurers and the committee whose duty is to collect monies from candidates. As stated, the money is intended for finding the most relevant and accurate source of national examination questions that could make students set their feet on the door steps of higher education. Some of the amount was to lure the officials who would come to oversee the examination in the school. Students called this part of the money “Invigilators’ pocket money.” If the officials receive the money, students gain full control over the examinations without any threat or feeling of the presence of delegated officials, including the security officers. Students would discuss the questions in the examination room and share the answers among themselves. Invigilators only serve as the guards to alert students in case Kenya National Examination Council officials would pop into the examination center.

Yeqlab’s claims are similar to what Juliet stated on Eneza Media (June 21st, 2016) on student’s views:

“

I cheat because the custodians of the exam papers have been tempted to reveal the content prior to the exam time. I cheat so as to secure a place in a national high school which increases my chance of cheating myself into one of the top best universities to take the most prestigious courses. - **Juliet on Eneza Media**

”

## What motivates the students to engage in such an unethical act?



Atany who has been teaching in high school for more than five years lamented over the scarcity of classrooms and seats which do not correspond to the five hundred admitted students.



**Atany believes that such a huge enrolment with limited shelters and seats leads to examination irregularities within refugee schools.**

He further argued that absenteeism is another aspect that fosters the plan to sow the seed of examination dishonesty among learners. Atany said, "If a student does not attend lessons, she or he misses a lot of information." Therefore, absenteeism is the beginning of academic dishonesty. Likewise on his part, he remembered how he wished to cheat in examination but because of the presence of the invigilator, he could not look at what he scribbled on a scrub of paper. Such academic malpractices stem from the reasons which Juliet noted on Eneza Media (June 21st, 2016). Juliet quoted a student saying,

“

I do cheat because I am not prepared to handle any test in a subject. In addition, information was drilled into my brain for only one purpose - excelling in exams.

”

This is a signal that students go to school to pass examinations but not to acquire knowledge and skills for their future benefit and development.

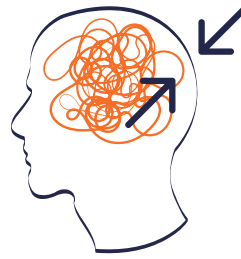
Reacting to examination irregularities, Demah, a teenager who has done several regional examinations in this school stated that academic dishonesty happens in their school in every examination period. Though he never played a part in this unwelcome exercise, Demah would see some of his peers being escorted to principal's office on account of violating examination ethics. The same sentiment was echoed by his classmate Karamu. According to Karamu, teachers do a thorough check at the examination room entrance, but she also wonders how some of the students get in with a whole text book or other foreign materials to assist in scoring high marks. She stated that she has never been untruthful in any examinations and that she does not feel like doing so, because any high marks acquired without work are worth nothing.

Yeqlab and Imrab pointed their fingers at the conditions for further studies. Many students from a refugee set-up aspire to further their studies, especially in Canada under a WUSC scholarship, because they look at it as a form of resettlement and they have the ambition to acquire wealth and send foreign currency remittances from Canada to their families back home. However, WUSC has admissions criteria which all aspirants must meet. These two participants noted that examination dishonesty mainly affects the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examinations, which are conducted at the end of every year.

### 4.3 LOCAL EXAMINATIONS: PREPARATIONS FOR NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

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All the five participants expressed similar views on the ways examinations are conducted in secondary schools. When describing the local examinations during the school term, they described two types of examinations from different sources which are conducted in the school. The local examinations, according to Imrab, are set by various teachers from different high schools within the three refugee camps. Imrab noted that the local examinations were meant to curb examination irregularities which had been practiced for long within the secondary schools. The exercises are scheduled in a way that only those subjects to be done on a particular day are brought to the schools in order to avoid premature access to examination questions. Atany explained that every term the school conducts three local examinations. The first one is immediately at the start of the new term. This is a welcome test that tunes back the reasoning of students from home to school and it is known as Continuous Assessment Test one. The second exam is done immediately when students report back to school after a one week mid-term break then followed by the third one at the end of the term. This shows that students in secondary schools in Dadaab refugee camps in a year sit for nine examinations which are set by the teachers of those secondary schools under Windle International within the refugee camps.



I argue that if such a move to frequently test students helps in minimizing examination anxiety, there should not be any academic dishonesty.

Nonetheless, I am tempted to agree with Atany who figured out absenteeism as the ingredient to these unwelcome practices. Imrab however declined to discuss National Examinations, because as stated before, refugees are not registered with the Teachers' Service Commission and therefore they cannot participate in the National Examinations exercises.

### 4.4 WUSC SCHOLARSHIP: LIFE GAINED OR LIVES LOST?

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The expectation of most refugee learners is to score a high grade so that they get the WUSC scholarship to further their studies in Canada. In this regard, balancing the weight of ambitions with attendance becomes a real task. This means that a student whose attendance has not been consistent decides to concentrate on the second plan of funding examination irregularity. Atany acknowledged that lack of confidence in most students who sit for examinations arises when they miss several lessons that they cannot cover up within the short time to the examinations session.

The anxiety to score a B+ or above as the outcome of the incoming National Examinations and the imagination to be in a Canadian school leads to stress among students. Such ambitions have caused loss of lives in Ifo refugee encampment. In the year 2018, a student who scored below his expectation for the WUSC scholarship had to repeat in Gedi Secondary for the same aspiration. Regrettably, the boy committed suicide after failing again to score the required grade. The note found in his pocket reads,



I found that life has become meaningless if what I struggle to achieve cannot come true.



Similarly in the year 2019, a student from Ifo Secondary School hung himself on receiving his national examination results indicating an E grade. Contrary to his expectation to score a high grade, the Ifo Secondary student decided not to stay alive to watch his fellow friends advance their studies. Thus, desire for the WUSC funding has already resulted in the loss of two student lives in Ifo refugee camp.

This is an indication that refugee students value a WUSC scholarship as the only route to prosperity as they dream to progress in their lives. Some of them view this scholarship as an indirect resettlement opportunity and whoever gets such an opportunity feels that he or she is awarded double benefits such as free education and resettlement in Canada.

**In Ifo refugee camp, students' ambitions to further their studies, especially through the WUSC scholarship, conflict with their academic performance, which in many instances becomes the barrier to acquire the scholarship.**



**AMBITION**

VS



**ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

In addition to this particular opportunity that is so limited within the refugee community in Kenya, it also requires a high grade performance in examinations. Due to the intake procedure, it can be deduced that the sponsor of this project seems to have designed the criterion of high level academic achievement as the only factor to which to pay attention when selecting the refugee students in order to sort out high demand for access to higher education through WUSC. This policy makes a lot of refugee students who aspire to reach Canada through higher education end up only dreaming of the WUSC scholarship and resettlement in that popular country. Such intake criteria really affect the self-esteem of the unsuccessful refugee students, thus some feel that suicide is the only alternative to address their concerns.

Despite organized irregularities in which students participated, still many of them failed to reach the higher education requirement cut-off line because of low performance. In my view therefore, I think that the claims of “under-marking,” which Yeqlab and Imrab mentioned, though not substantiated, might have some validity. To restate, these two participants convincingly lamented that Dadaab students are stigmatized and their examination papers are under-marked. In support of their claim, they observed that even if examinations were too hard, it is unlikely that even the most intelligent students would score the same E grade similar to the low-performing students.

**Participants alluded to the possibility of a schemed action which is meant to frustrate refugee students academically.**

Such a claim is similar to the OECD reviews of integrity in Education (OECD 2017) which discovered that over-marking of the learners’ assessments were detected among teachers. This report further disclosed that the differences in the classroom results across the country were questionable, especially the survey done by the Ukrainian Centre for Education Quality Assessment (CEQA).

## 4.5 CHANGE THE MODEL OF EXAMINATIONS

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In response to examination malpractices, which engage students in a behaviour that tends to alter the meaning of examinations culture, Imrab stated that there is a need to totally restructure the curriculum and develop it with the strategy to inculcate critical thinking on all the intended disciplines. Imrab feels that the current curriculum favours cheating because the examination questions are always specific and require direct memorized and specific answers. This is the pool where unknowingly irregularities originate, develop and hatch to life. Imrab proposed that educators should consider creating an examination model that gives learners freedom to interact with the questions and through critical thinking seek answers in their own style of understanding. Imrab’s idea has weight and needs further consideration. While I concur with the idea of Imrab, I would further suggest that



**summative examinations need to be rethought and be replaced with formative examinations because the approaches of this method give learners better chances to open up their minds for critical thinking and answer questions according to their understanding in relation to the theme.**



Furthermore, in formative examinations, students are evaluated within the context of the recent unit which has just been covered and students can still remember how they were interacting with the course content. In addition, formative examinations enhance students' ability to reason with any challenges that may come their way because lessons are learned through a child-centered approach. If students can analyze the tasks assigned to them by themselves, then this approach can help to minimize academic dishonesty. Yeqlab also emphasized this point and asserted that students are justified to contribute money in order to dig deep to find the porous wall of examinations and snatch at least something from which they can benefit. She stated that the education system is not fair to students and sets them up in a way that makes dishonesty justifiable.

#### **4.6 INVOLVE PRIMARY SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS EXAMINATION DISHONESTY**

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Atany was convinced that these academic dishonesties start from the primary school levels where every candidate ambitiously works out all possible means to step into secondary education. He cited the cases where examination results of different years from some primary schools in the refugee encampment were disqualified. The same students whose attitude towards examination malpractices is inscribed in their hearts are the ones enrolled in secondary education and they move forward with that belief on examination dishonesty.

Despite the fact that those students know very well that moving to the next grade level becomes twice as hard if their tricks to cheat in examinations are blocked, they still perceive that they can perform better regardless of whether they read many relevant books within the syllabus content.

**Students from primary schools carry along with them the spirit of academic irregularities into secondary schools.**

In this regard, when designing a method to curb these habitual practices, every stakeholder from primary to secondary school should play a role that will set our generation free from the bondage of academic dishonesty.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Education is a pivotal point of society. Therefore, it necessitates academic ethics and transparency in all the economic transactions conducted in the name of educating our children. In Sub-Saharan Africa, examinations are used to identify the honest and transparent future public service officers. That goes to say that if students are not honest during examinations, it is not surprising that nothing good is expected of their services even if they are entrusted to hold public office. This is the view expressed by Atany during the interview: some students are so bold that during examinations they can carry a whole book or a cheat-sheet into the examination room without the awareness of invigilators who watch the entrance. He further stated that if such students can unscrupulously manipulate examinations, then society will have civil servants who lack the knowledge to manage offices, for example, even though their academic documents are perceived to be valid. He speculated that many houses collapse because the engineers who build them did not qualify for construction and patients die of curable diseases in hospitals because doctors don't have enough knowledge to prescribe the right medicine. They all were accredited to their professions, however, to pass they cheated in professional examinations. All these are indications of failing the society.

I designed my research study to examine the validity of my observations about academic dishonesty and its impact on the declining integrity of education within the refugee camps. Considering that there is much documentation on education in Dadaab refugee encampment, I found that there are gaps in what is documented on education needs.

**My paper studied the process of how academic ethics are breached, the frequency of these breaches, and ways that this issue could be addressed. In this regard, my interviewees (two students and three teachers) confirmed that academic dishonesty exists.**

However, students who participated in interviews were not open enough to state in detail the manner in which this examination dishonesty happens despite the fact that they confirmed the existence of the malpractices.

From written documents, there appears to be interconnected actions among various examination events in several parts of the Sub-Saharan region. The news by Xinhua News agency (2018) indicates that teachers and top education authorities in Tanzania are actively involved in dishonesty on learning assessments.



The interesting part here is that teachers usually abuse power by blaming students who fail or are charged with breaching the examination rules. Even though teachers are actively involved in designing methods for academic dishonesty, they do not shy away from blaming students. For instance, in my study, the teacher Atany assigns blame on poor student attendance and lack of concentration as key reasons for examination dishonesty.

Though several measures have been put in place to curb academic dishonesty, the education ministry is failing to settle the challenges which incite examination irregularities, such as equipping schools with enough learning resources, paying teachers well as a form of motivation so that they concentrate on teaching, improving school structures, upgrading all schools to the same level, building more classrooms to decongest the overpopulated ones, and restructuring the curriculum to reflect on contemporary issues, which can make children understand better and keep up with the learning content rather than concentrating on past events that require memorizing.

**The fact that the education ministry is still moving along the periphery of these problems indicates that the right measures to handle examination dishonesty are not yet established.**

In this regard, below I offer suggestions of what can be done to minimize these unethical practices within schools. These suggestions are offered with full awareness of the limited nature of my study, which means that there is still room for more research on this topic. For example, it would be interesting to know the teaching methodology in secondary schools, the qualification of teachers employed and their approaches to curriculum, and the position of parents and other stakeholders on examination cheating. In relation to Atany's claim of fake employees, there is need to question the credibility of teachers and other employees within the education sector. Further research could also examine the criteria of marking and grading the National Examinations, which is raising the eyebrows of students from the North Eastern Region, especially Garissa County.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the research has confirmed that examination dishonesty is an issue, below are some recommendations for curbing these irregularities:

1



The education ministry and its stakeholders should equip schools with enough learning resources, pay teachers well as a form of motivation so that they concentrate on teaching, improve school structures, upgrade all schools to the same level, build more classrooms to decongest the overpopulated ones, and restructure the curriculum to reflect on contemporary issues, which can make children understand better and keep up with the learning content rather than concentrating on past events that require memorizing.

2



The government should set up an examination security policy that prevents examination leakage right from setting the exam through to the students taking the exam.

3



The government should employ officers who are not money minded to monitor examination setting and printing. In addition, monitoring of officers is needed.

4



Summative examinations should be replaced by formative examinations in order to reduce anxiety.

5



An examinations counseling unit should be introduced in schools to help shape students' attitudes towards examinations.

6



Curriculum and syllabi should be designed in relation to contemporary issues and activities. This will help students to cope with and be interested in learning demands.

7



The government should restructure classrooms and equip them with enough contemporary learning resources which motivate practical learning.

8



Children should be allowed to explore their new world through Internet connectivity.

9



All schools within a country should be connected with electricity and Internet regardless of their geographic and political positions.

10



The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) needs to review its refugee higher education intake policy so that it increases the number of refugee student beneficiaries in order to minimize tragedies such as suicide as witnessed in Ifo refugee camp.

11



More institutions for higher education should be designed to cater toward those whose grades cannot open the gates to enter into some universities with high grade requirements.

12



NGOs who are funding refugee education should meet the beneficiaries in the field to get a clear picture of the schools' demands so that their donations meet the project expectations. Close follow-ups should be one of the tools for transparency.

13



NGOs who implement education should set policy that considers the interest and welfare of both the child and the teacher in school.

14



The education ministry and education implementing organizations should involve primary school stakeholders in curbing examinations irregularities within education system in the country.

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# LERRN

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