



August 3, 2022

Corruption Watch Exclusive – The ‘Cheating Squad’

...How some High School Authorities Assist Students to Cheat in the WASSCE

A Corruption Watch investigation has uncovered grand schemes existing in some second cycle institutions for assisting candidates to cheat in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

The investigation, conducted in the Ashanti and Bono regions of Ghana before and during the conduct of the 2021 WASSCE for School Candidates, reveals that some schools have instituted special levies which they charge students in return for help to solve examination questions.

Corruption Watch discovered at All For Christ Senior High/Technical School and Duadaso Number 1 Senior High/Technical School, both in the Bono Region, that the said levies are put in a pool and used to compromise teachers and invigilators to solve questions for students in the examination hall.

All For Christ Senior High/Technical School also charged special fees to award unearned continuous assessment marks to unqualified persons whom they register as school candidates to allow them to retake the WASSCE.

Agnes Norkor Teye-Cudjoe, head of Public Affairs at the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), disclosed to Corruption Watch that at the All For Christ Senior High/Technical School, WAEC’s “investigative team that was on the ground” detected and reported some incidents of malpractice. “So we have reports on malpractices that occurred at All for Christ,” she said.

In a two-page letter to Corruption Watch, Mr Owusu Gyaase, the Headmaster of All For Christ Senior High/Technical School, denied that the school charged fees for continuous assessment marks or engaged in examination malpractice.

On the other hand, Mr. Peterson Aning, the headmaster of Duadaso Number 1 Senior High/Technical School, did not offer a response to our findings in spite of indicating in a phone call that he would do so.

The investigation shows that school authorities, teachers, parents and security officials are all complicit in the school-based schemes that allow students to cheat at examination halls.

In addition, the content of some secretly recorded audio-visual materials indicates the involvement of some unidentified top officials of WAEC who allegedly help school authorities to perpetrate malpractices as well as escape sanctions.

Background

In July 2021, Corruption Watch received tip offs about the intention of some schools and individuals to perpetrate examination malpractice during the 2021 WASSCE.

Consequently, in September, this reporter set out to investigate the potential examination malpractices, paying special attention to orchestrated efforts by some school authorities to assist candidates to cheat at examination halls.

I also focused on the role of racketeers in the leakage of some question papers.

Before the 2021 WASSCE, there were clear indications that malpractices were going to move a notch higher as some school authorities were prepared to facilitate examination malpractices in their schools.

In the course of the examination, WAEC confirmed that it was aware of some of the school-based schemes. George Ohene Mantey, head of the Test Administration Division of WAEC, revealed that “The following schools in respect of which tip offs were received on intents to cheat are being closely monitored for evidence to validate the claims.

“The schools are: Ejisu Senior High Technical School located at Ejisu, Anlo-Afiadenyigba Senior High School at Afiadenyigba, Tapa Senior High School at Tapa, Yeji Senior High Technical School at Yeji, King David College at Somanya, Ideal College, Sunyani, Christ the King Senior High School, Obuasi, Modern Senior High School, Kpong and another Modern Senior High School at Kintampo, Oyoko Methodist Senior High School, Klo Agogo Senior High School.”

By the time WAEC put out the list of the eleven (11) schools, which were allegedly planning to cheat, Corruption Watch was already monitoring the conduct of the examinations in four other schools, which WAEC did not include in their list, across the Ashanti and Bono regions.

However, it was in the Bono Region where our cameras and audio devices captured moments in two schools where some authorities assisted students to cheat in examination halls.

Corruption Watch discovered syndicated schemes for cheating before and during the WASSCE at All For Christ Senior High/Technical School and Duadaso Number 1 Senior High/Technical School. The schools are located about 90 kilometers apart but they employed similar strategies to assist their candidates to cheat, especially during the conduct of core subjects.

All For Christ Senior High/Technical School is a popular private second cycle institution located at Kato, a suburb of Berekum, whereas Duadaso Number 1 Senior High/Technical School is a state-funded institution located at Duadaso Number 1, a cashew growing community near Sampa.

Pre-exams arrangement for cheating

Regarding pre-WASSCE arrangements for cheating, our investigations revealed both schools admitted students who should otherwise register as private candidates for a fee.

In the case of All For Christ Senior High/Technical School, authorities charge the students about two hundred and fifty Ghana cedis (GHC250) in return for unearned continuous assessment marks in order to process them as school candidates for WASSCE.

For the purpose of this investigation, a Corruption Watch agent called the Headmaster of All For Christ Senior High/Technical School, Mr Owusu Gyaase to enquire about the conditions for admission into third year. This was what transpired.

Corruption Watch (CW): I want to make enquiries about writing...

Owusu Gyaase (OG): ...the WASSCE?

CW: Yes, please.

OG: Alright! Initially, when you come here you pay for continuous assessment, which is two-point-five.

CW: Continuous assessment?

OG: Aaahh! Which is two-point-five.

CW: As in two hundred and fifty cedis?

OG: Yes. Are you going to be a day [student] or boarder?

CW: ...the issue is I'm working.

OG: ...sign for day [student]. The day school fee is four-point-one (four hundred and ten cedis), boarding is five-point-one (five hundred and ten cedis).

CW: And then the main reason why I am interested is that I've written my [core] math several times and it's still not working.

OG: Here, it is going to be a last stop for you.

CW: Oh okay. I'm praying so.

OG: You know the continuous assessment helps the student to pass. Every exam you take is marked over 70 (percent); 30 percent is in the school. And for this thirty (30) percent...the lowest mark we arrange is twenty-five (25) over thirty (30). Twenty-seven (27), twenty-eight (28), twenty-nine (29) could be your classwork. We use the big numbers for the difficult subjects. And, as you are a day student, you only buy the school uniform; when it is time for you to write the WASSCE then you put it on.

CW: Do I need to always come for classes because it'll be difficult [for me] to get permission from my boss.

OG: You beg your boss, come down here and sign. One day will do. Then when it is the time for writing the WASSCE then you come in.

CW: So, Mr Owusu, please are you the headmaster?

OG: I'm the headmaster.

At the Duadaso Number 1 Senior High/Technical School, popularly known as Duhigh, some school authorities laid the foundation for assisting students to cheat at the beginning of the academic year.

By February 2021, these school authorities had directed that final year students should pay a sum of three hundred Ghana cedis (GHC300).

Corruption Watch intercepted copies of bank pay-in slips, indicating that the students paid a sum of three hundred Ghana cedis (GHC300) into an account that the school has with the Duadaso Number 1 agency of the Brong Ahafo Catholic Co-Operative Society for Development (BACCSOD Limited).

Another pay-in slip in the possession of Corruption Watch indicates that a separate category of students paid two thousand four hundred Ghana cedis (GHC2400) into the same account that the school holds with BACCSOD Limited.

In addition, a receipt in possession of Corruption Watch shows the payment of two thousand six hundred (GHC2600) directly to the school's account office.

Corruption Watch sources say the payment of the two thousand four hundred Ghana cedis (GHC2400) and two thousand six hundred (GHC2600) were by students that the school admitted into third year for a fee without the approval of the Ghana Education Service (GES).

To confirm the allegation of unapproved admissions to year three, a Corruption Watch agent called a number advertised on the Facebook page of Duhigh. We found out that the number belongs to Emmanuel Peh, the senior housemaster of the school. Emmanuel Peh spelled out the terms and conditions for midstream admissions when our agent called to feign interest in securing admission to the school. He told our potential student to prepare to pay about three thousand cedis (GHC3,000), inclusive of hostel fees.

Corruption Watch (CW): I am a worker but I want to...further my education. So, I decided to contact you to find out how you can help me join the school and then I want to know if I can join, like, as a third-year student.

Emmanuel Peh (EP): Yeah...it may be possible but as at now...I can't give you hundred percent answer that yes! Now what I'll do is that you call me back somewhere in January [2022].

CW: January?

EP: Registration will start somewhere January-February thereabout. So, what you need to do is that, which course please?

CW: Oh, I want to do my [core] math and [core] science. Sorry, I'm a General Arts student, actually.

EP: You know you can't do just two subjects. All you need to do is that you register as a candidate. You know school candidates you can't register some courses...

CW: ...yeah, sure. I will do everything. No problem.

EP: So, you register everything.

CW: Okay.

EP: And when the time is due, maybe, if you are able to....we are very sure that you'll pass everything correctly.

CW: Okay. So...

EP: ...so you be preparing...around three thousand Ghana (GHC3,000)...

CW: Three thousand cedis (GHC3,000)?

EP: Yes. Last year or this year they paid two thousand six hundred (GHC2,600).

CW: Okay. So plus, or minus three thousand?

EP: Yeah.

CW: Okay, that's fine. So, would I need to buy uniforms or it's all part of the three thousand [cedis] I should be preparing?

EP: If it becomes possible that you can be registered here, everything is inclusive. The uniform is part of it.

CW: Okay. Alright. And would I buy books or...?

EP: Yes. For that one...for sure you'll have to buy. You have to buy. What we'll be giving you is, maybe, the uniform; and that one...we'll give you only one because what I've seen is that you'll not be a regular student.

CW: Yeah.

EP: You just wait when the exams, the date is about a week's time, then you come and then join your colleagues.

CW: Please sir, your name?

EP: My name is Emmanuel.

CW: Emmanuel?

EP: Yes. I'm the senior housemaster.

In view of Senior House Master, Emmanuel Peh's request that the Corruption Watch undercover agent should follow up in January/February 2022 for possible admission to the school, we made four calls to his phone in February 2022 but none of the calls was answered.

To be continued...

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