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IMPACT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES ON CURBING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE ON STUDENTS' ECONOMICS ACHIEVEMENT IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL IN NORTH WEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of quality assurance strategies on curbing examination malpractice and students' Economics achievement in senior secondary schools in North West, Nigeria. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population 1,343, 803 respondents and sample comprised 656 respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to obtain respondents' opinions on trained invigilators, technological innovations, examination malpractice and students' achievement in Economics. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while one-sample *t*-tests were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that trained invigilators significantly influenced students' Economics achievement, with a grand mean of 3.40 and a one-sample *t*-test result of $t(655) = 42.11$, $p < .05$. The findings showed that technological innovations significantly influenced the curbing of students' Economics examination malpractice, with a grand mean of 3.48 and a *t*-test result of $t(655) = 44.16$, $p < .05$. technological innovations significantly influenced students' Economics achievement, with a grand mean of 3.39 and a *t*-test result

Keywords: trained invigilators, technological innovations, examination malpractice, Economics achievement, Senior Secondary Schools.

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of $t(655) = 40.39$, $p < .05$. The study concluded that trained invigilators and technological innovations are important considerations in strengthening examination integrity and assessment practices in Senior Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria. It recommended regular training of invigilators, the adoption of appropriate technological innovations, and the provision of adequate information and communication technology facilities in schools.

Introduction

Quality assurance has become an important component of educational management because it promotes the maintenance of academic standards, accountability, effective teaching and learning, and the credibility of educational assessment. In secondary education, quality assurance involves the systematic monitoring, evaluation and improvement of educational processes to ensure that schools achieve their stated objectives. These processes include effective supervision of teaching, regular inspection of schools, monitoring of examination administration, enforcement of examination regulations, professional development of teachers and the use of appropriate assessment procedures. Quality assurance is particularly important in Economics education because students' achievement in the subject provides an indication of their understanding of economic concepts, principles and practical applications. Effective quality assurance strategies are therefore necessary to ensure that Economics examinations assess students' actual knowledge and abilities rather than their capacity to engage in examination malpractice.

Examination malpractice remains a persistent challenge to the credibility of educational assessment in Nigeria. It includes dishonest practices such as copying, impersonation, collusion, possession of unauthorised materials, leakage of examination questions, alteration of scores and other activities intended to obtain unfair examination advantages. Such practices undermine the validity and reliability of examination results because the scores obtained may not accurately reflect students' knowledge, understanding and academic abilities. In their study of secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria, Kumo et al. (2023) found that examination malpractice was perceived to have a negative impact on students' academic performance across gender, school location and school ownership categories. The researchers recommended continuous orientation and enlightenment to help control examination malpractice. (SokeDu Review)

The persistence of examination malpractice suggests that examination administration requires more than the preparation of examination questions and the marking of answer scripts. Examination malpractice refers to any form of dishonest or unethical behavior that occurs during the process of conducting examinations or assessments. It includes actions aimed at gaining an unfair advantage or manipulating the results of an examination (Galle, Nasiru, Alaku & Samuel, 2021). Examination offences is commonly defined as acts that violates the rules and integrity of examination process, where a candidate or other persons seek to gain or give an unfair advantage, or engages in conducts that undermines the credibility of the assessment (Akaranga, & Ongong, 2023). Common forms of examination malpractice include cheating, plagiarism, collusion,

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impersonation, fabrication, and misrepresentation. Examination malpractice undermines the integrity of the assessment process and devalues the efforts of honest students. Educational institutions and examination boards typically have strict policies and procedures in place to prevent and address instances of examination malpractice (Asante, 2014). Examination malpractice refers to any dishonest behavior or misconduct that violates examination rules and regulations. It undermines the credibility of assessments and devalues academic qualifications.

It requires systematic quality assurance measures that address the conduct of students, teachers, invigilators, school administrators and examination officials. Duvie and Eluwa (2016), in their study of management strategies for curbing examination malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools, identified adequate invigilation, syllabus coverage and effective management of examination procedures as important preventive measures. Their findings also highlighted the need for effective enforcement of examination regulations. (OAPub) This implies that quality assurance strategies should be implemented before, during and after examinations to prevent misconduct, identify irregularities and ensure that appropriate corrective measures are taken.

One important quality assurance strategy is the effective training and deployment of examination invigilators. Trained invigilators are expected to understand examination regulations, maintain discipline, supervise students fairly, identify suspicious behaviour and report examination irregularities. Their competence and professionalism can help establish an orderly examination environment in which students are encouraged to rely on their knowledge and preparation. Conversely, inadequate supervision, negligence and the involvement of examination officials in misconduct can weaken examination security and compromise the credibility of results. Therefore, continuous training, professional orientation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms are necessary to strengthen the contribution of invigilators to examination quality assurance.

Another important strategy is the adoption of technological innovations in examination administration. Technologies such as computer-based testing, electronic surveillance, biometric identification and digital examination monitoring can support the verification of candidates, improve the security of examination materials and facilitate the detection of irregularities. However, technology does not automatically eliminate examination malpractice. Chukwuebuka (2024), in a qualitative study involving quality assurance leaders in North-Western Nigeria, identified examination malpractice as a problem associated with financial incentives, social pressures and weaknesses in examination supervision. The study recommended stronger enforcement, the use of technology to improve monitoring and greater emphasis on students' actual competencies rather than certificates alone. (ijble.com) This suggests that technological innovations should complement, rather than replace, effective supervision, ethical education and the enforcement of examination regulations.

Furthermore, quality assurance strategies require regular inspection, monitoring and evaluation of examination procedures. School administrators and education authorities need to establish mechanisms for identifying examination-related weaknesses, investigating reported misconduct and ensuring compliance with established standards. Okunlola (2024), in a qualitative study of quality assurance leaders' experiences in public examinations in North-Western Nigeria, reported that examination malpractice involved both traditional practices and technology-related misconduct. The study also identified institutional weaknesses, financial incentives and societal

pressures as factors contributing to the problem. Its recommendations included stronger surveillance, appropriate sanctions and the promotion of academic integrity. (jett.labosfor.com) These findings indicate that quality assurance should address not only students' behaviour but also the institutional and administrative conditions that allow examination malpractice to occur.

The problem is particularly important in Economics education at the senior secondary school level. Economics helps students understand production, consumption, distribution, markets, employment, inflation, public finance and the allocation of scarce resources. Achievement in the subject is expected to reflect students' understanding of these concepts and their ability to apply economic principles to real-life situations. When examination malpractice occurs, students may obtain scores that do not represent their actual competence. This can make it difficult for teachers and school administrators to identify learning difficulties, evaluate instructional effectiveness and provide appropriate academic support. Consequently, examination malpractice undermines the usefulness of Economics assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning.

The relationship between quality assurance and students' Economics achievement is therefore important. Effective examination supervision and the enforcement of examination regulations can help ensure that students complete assessments under fair and consistent conditions. Similarly, the use of appropriate technological innovations can strengthen examination security and improve the credibility of assessment procedures. However, improved examination security should be accompanied by effective teaching, adequate instructional resources, students' preparation and appropriate feedback. Quality assurance should not focus exclusively on preventing cheating; it should also ensure that examination results provide reliable information about students' academic progress and learning needs.

Despite the importance of these strategies, examination malpractice continues to pose challenges to the credibility of secondary school examinations in Nigeria. Pinga et al. (2025) discussed the challenges associated with examination malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools and highlighted the need for coordinated strategies to address its causes and consequences. Their work reinforces the importance of combining preventive measures, effective examination management and ethical orientation in efforts to reduce examination misconduct. (AJOL) This suggests that isolated interventions may be insufficient unless they are supported by consistent institutional monitoring, adequate resources and the commitment of all stakeholders.

In North-West Nigeria, where the study focuses on Senior Secondary Schools, it is important to examine how quality assurance strategies operate in the administration of Economics examinations. The effectiveness of trained invigilators, technological innovations and other examination monitoring measures needs to be assessed in relation to examination malpractice and students' achievement. Although existing Nigerian studies have examined examination malpractice, its consequences and possible control measures, further investigation is necessary to establish how the selected quality assurance strategies relate specifically to Economics examination malpractice and students' achievement in the study area.

According to Mustapha (2019), quality assurance strategies (QAS) and examination malpractice in secondary schools is intricate and multifaceted, reflecting the broader context of educational integrity and institutional effectiveness. Economics proficiency is widely recognized as a fundamental skill set essential for success in various academic disciplines and professional fields.

However, the prevalence of examination malpractice poses a significant threat to students' genuine acquisition of mathematical knowledge and skills. Malpractice distorts assessment outcomes, inflates academic performance artificially, and undermines the validity of students' achievements (Abdulmalik, et'al ,2020). According to Khan, Shatti and Amann, (2020), the following quality assurance indices is aimed at detecting, deterring, and addressing instances of malpractice effectively.

The deployment of trained invigilators and supervisors during examinations plays a pivotal role in maintaining examination integrity. These individuals are tasked with actively monitoring students to prevent cheating and collusion during the assessment process. Through proper training and adherence to monitoring protocols, invigilators can swiftly identify and address suspected cases of malpractice, thereby safeguarding the credibility of the examination (Khan, et'al, 2020). Technological innovation also emerges as a vital aspect of quality assurance in combating examination malpractice. Secondary schools can leverage technological solutions such as online examinations and biometric verification systems to enhance the security and authentication of the assessment process (Khan, et'al, 2020).

Senior secondary education in Nigeria faces significant challenges in implementing effective quality assurance strategies due to systemic issues, societal pressures, and technological advancements. Examination malpractice remains a critical concern, worsened by digital technologies that facilitate unauthorized access to materials and collaboration among students, making it difficult for invigilators to enforce integrity. Poor infrastructure, lack of preparation, untrained invigilators, and digital technologies further enabled cheating. This study explores how quality assurance strategies can help curb examination malpractice and improve Economics achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in North West Nigeria. The independent variables in this study include policy enforcement, stakeholder collaboration, teacher training, invigilator effectiveness, the use of technology for monitoring, and public awareness campaigns. These factors influence the implementation of quality assurance strategies in senior secondary education. The dependent variables focus on the effects of malpractice and quality assurance, including examination integrity, academic achievement, Economics achievement, student ethical development, and trust in the educational system.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What is the influence of trained invigilators on students' Economics achievement in North West, Nigerian Senior Secondary School?
2. What is the influence of technological innovations in curbing students' Economics examination malpractice in North West, Nigerian Senior Secondary School?
3. What is the influence of technological innovations on students' Economics achievement in North West, Nigerian Senior Secondary School?

Statement of the Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses (Ho) developed was tested at a 0.05 level of significance

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Ho1: There is no significant influence of trained invigilators on students' Economics achievement in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary School.

Ho2: There is no significant influence of Technological innovations on curbing students' Economics examination malpractice in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools.

Ho3: There is no significant influence of Technological innovations on students' Economics achievement in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey design enables researchers to collect information from a sample of a population to describe respondents' opinions, attitudes, experiences, and perceptions concerning a particular phenomenon. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), research design provides a framework for connecting research questions, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis.

The population of the study comprised 1,310, 803 respondents (300,342 students, 10,251 Economics teachers and 210 quality assurance) from all the senior secondary schools in North-West Nigeria, comprising Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara states. The study involved 656 respondents. The sample size represented the number of participants whose responses were included in the statistical analysis.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled *Quality Assurance Strategies, Examination Malpractice and Students' Economics Achievement Questionnaire* (QASEMSAEQ).The questionnaire was developed to obtain respondents' opinions on the influence of trained invigilators and technological innovations on examination malpractice and students' Economics achievement. It contained 15 items organised into three clusters corresponding to the three research questions. QASEMSAEQ was validated by expert, which gave 0.74 validity index and 0.75 reliability index. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while one-sample *t*-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Data were presented based on research question and hypotheses

RQ1: what is the influence of trained invigilators on students' Economics achievement in North Central, Nigerian Senior Secondary School?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Trained Invigilators and Students' Economics Achievement (N = 656)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD
1	Competent invigilators maintain a calm exam environment that enhances student achievement in Economics .	3.43	0.78
2	Professional invigilators ensure a fair examination process, boosting students' confidence in Economics .	3.47	0.75
3	The involvement of trained invigilators helps students focus better during Economics exams.	3.39	0.80

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S/N	Item Statement	Mean (x̄)	SD
4	Students perform better in exams when invigilators exhibit professionalism.	3.45	0.77
5	Untrained invigilators may inadvertently disrupt students' concentration and achievement.	3.28	0.88
	Grand Mean	**3.40**	**0.80**

Table 1 results indicate that all the items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, showing agreement among respondents. Item 2, which states that *professional invigilators ensure a fair examination process, boosting students' confidence in Economics* , recorded the highest mean score (x̄ = 3.47, SD = 0.75). This was followed by Item 4 *(x̄ = 3.45, SD = 0.77)* and Item 1 *(x̄ = 3.43, SD = 0.78)*. Item 5, concerning the possibility that untrained invigilators may disrupt students' concentration and achievement, recorded the lowest mean score *(x̄ = 3.28, SD = 0.88)*, although respondents still agreed with the statement. The grand mean of **3.40** indicates that respondents generally agreed that trained invigilators positively influence students' Economics achievement. The standard deviation values ranging from **0.75 to 0.88** suggest a relatively high level of agreement among respondents.

Ho1: Trained invigilators has no significant influence on students' Economics achievement in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary School,

Table 2: One-Sample t-Test of the Influence of Trained Invigilators on Students' Economics Achievement (N = 656)

Variable	N	Mean	StD Dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Trained Invigilators and Students' Economics Achievement	656	4.20	0.73	42.11	655	.000	1.20	1.14	1.26

Test Value = 3.00

Table 2 shows one-sample t-test revealed that trained invigilators have a significant influence on students' Economics achievement in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools, **t(655) = 42.11, p < .05**. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the Ho1 was rejected. The findings indicate that trained invigilators significantly influence students' Economics achievement.

RQ2: What is the influence of technological innovations in curbing students' Economics examination malpractice in North West, Nigerian Senior Secondary School?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Technological Innovations in Curbing Students' Economics Examination Malpractice (N = 656)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean (x̄)	SD
6	The use of surveillance cameras in examination halls prevents malpractice.	3.52	0.71
7	Technological tools like metal detectors effectively identify prohibited materials.	3.46	0.75

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S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD
8	Biometric verification ensures only authorized students access the examination hall.	3.49	0.73
9	Online examination platforms reduce opportunities for physical malpractice.	3.37	0.82
10	Real-time monitoring systems discourage students from engaging in malpractice.	3.54	0.69
	Grand Mean	**3.48**	**0.74**

Table 3 indicate that all the items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, showing agreement among respondents. Item 10, which states that *real-time monitoring systems discourage students from engaging in malpractice*, recorded the highest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54, SD = 0.69). This was closely followed by Item 6 *($\bar{x}$ = 3.52, SD = 0.71)* and Item 23 *($\bar{x}$ = 3.49, SD = 0.73)*. Item 9, which concerns the role of online examination platforms in reducing opportunities for physical malpractice, recorded the lowest mean score *($\bar{x}$ = 3.37, SD = 0.82)*, though respondents still agreed with the statement. The grand mean of **3.48** indicates that respondents strongly agreed that technological innovations significantly influence the reduction of students' Economics examination malpractice. The standard deviation values ranging from **0.69 to 0.82** suggest a high level of consensus among the respondents.

Ho2: Technological innovations have no significant influence on curbing students' Economics examination malpractice in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools.

Table 4: One-Sample t-Test of the Influence of Technological Innovations on Curbing Students' Economics Examination Malpractice (N = 656)

Variable	N	Mean	StD Dev	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Technological Innovations and Curbing Economics Examination Malpractice	656	4.24	0.72	44.16	655	.000	1.24	1.18	1.30

Test Value = 3.00

Table 4 shows one-sample t-test revealed that technological innovations have a significant influence on curbing students' Economics examination malpractice in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools, **t(655) = 44.16, p < .05.** Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the Ho2 was rejected. The findings indicate that technological innovations significantly contribute to curbing students' Economics examination malpractice.

RQ3: What is the influence of technological innovations on students' Economics achievement in North West, Nigerian Senior Secondary School?

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Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of Technological Innovations on Students' Economics Achievement (N = 656)

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD
11	Technology-based exam systems promote fairness and enhance student confidence.	3.47	0.75
12	Students are more motivated to perform well when exams are monitored using technology.	3.42	0.79
13	Over-reliance on technology for exams may cause stress among students unfamiliar with it.	3.11	0.91
14	Technological advancements foster a more transparent and credible assessment process.	3.51	0.72
15	The use of innovative exam tools positively impacts student preparation and performance.	3.45	0.77
	Grand Mean	**3.39**	**0.79**

Table 5 show that all the items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating agreement among respondents. Item 14, which states that *technological advancements foster a more transparent and credible assessment process*, recorded the highest mean score of **3.51** with a standard deviation of **0.72.** This was followed by Item 11 *($\bar{x}$ = 3.47, SD = 0.75)* and Item 15 *($\bar{x}$ = 3.45, SD = 0.77)*. Item 13, concerning the possibility that over-reliance on technology may cause stress among students unfamiliar with it, recorded the lowest mean score *($\bar{x}$ = 3.11, SD = 0.91)*, although respondents still agreed with the statement. The grand mean of **3.39** indicates that respondents generally agreed that technological innovations positively influence students' Economics achievement. The standard deviation values ranging from **0.72 to 0.91** suggest a reasonable degree of consistency in respondents' opinions.

Ho3: Technological innovations has no significant influence on students' Economics achievement in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools

Table 6: One-Sample t-Test of the Influence of Technological Innovations on Students' Economics Achievement (N = 656)

Variable	N	Mean	StD Dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Technological Innovations on Economics achievement	656	4.18	0.75	40.39	655	.000	1.18	1.12	1.24

Test Value = 3.00

Table 6 shows one-sample t-test revealed that technological innovations have a significant influence on students' Economics achievement in North West Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools, **t(655) = 40.39, p < .05.** Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the Ho3 was rejected. The findings indicate that technological innovations significantly influence students' Economics achievement in the study area.

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Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that trained invigilators significantly influenced students' Economics achievement in Senior Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria. The respondents recorded a grand mean of 3.40, while the one-sample *t*-test result was significant, $t(655) = 42.11$, $p < .05$. Consequently, the H01 was rejected. This finding suggests that trained invigilators contribute to examination discipline, fairness, students' concentration and the credibility of examination results. The finding is consistent with the study by T. A. (2024), which investigated invigilator-related examination misconduct in selected tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. The study found that invigilator experience significantly influenced examination misconduct, with more experienced invigilators performing better in maintaining examination standards. The researchers recommended regular reorientation and appropriate disciplinary measures for invigilators.Similarly, Kumo, Abalaka, and Odili (2023) found that examination malpractice negatively affected students' academic performance in North-Central Nigeria, emphasising the need for continuous orientation and effective measures to control examination misconduct. These findings support the importance of effective examination supervision. Therefore, regular training and professional development for invigilators are necessary to strengthen examination integrity and support students' academic achievement.

The second findings indicated that technological innovations significantly influenced the curbing of students' Economics examination malpractice, with a grand mean of 3.48 and a one-sample *t*-test result of $t(655) = 44.16$, $p < .05$. The H02 was therefore rejected. Respondents particularly recognised the importance of real-time monitoring systems, surveillance cameras and biometric verification in improving examination security and discouraging misconduct. This finding agrees with Bagiwa and Mainoma (2026), who investigated the relationship between information and communication technology and examination malpractice in public secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Their study found that poor regulation of students' use of ICT devices could increase examination malpractice and recommended effective enforcement of examination regulations and training for school principals and teachers in ICT use. Similarly, Pinga, Jor, and Olatunde (2025) examined challenges and strategies for addressing examination malpractice in Nigerian secondary schools. They identified technological surveillance, strict enforcement of examination regulations and ethical education as relevant strategies for reducing malpractice. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating appropriate technologies into examination administration. However, technological measures should be accompanied by effective supervision, clear regulations and ethical orientation to ensure that they achieve their intended purpose.

The third findings showed that technological innovations significantly influenced students' Economics achievement, with a grand mean of 3.39 and a one-sample *t*-test result of $t(655) = 40.39$, $p < .05$. The H03 was consequently rejected. Respondents agreed that technology-supported examination systems could promote fairness, increase students' confidence and improve the transparency and credibility of assessment. However, the relatively lower mean score of 3.11 for the statement concerning stress among students unfamiliar with technology indicates that digital readiness should be considered when introducing technology-based examinations. This finding is supported by Akinlade, Ibikunle, and Orunbon (2026), whose study examined information and

communication technology, teaching techniques and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Their research focused on the relationship between ICT use, teaching approaches and students' academic performance, highlighting the relevance of technology in secondary education. Furthermore, a 2026 study by Bagiwa and Mainoma on ICT and examination malpractice emphasised the need to train teachers and school administrators in the effective use and regulation of technological facilities. These studies support the need for appropriate technological integration in secondary education. Nevertheless, because the present study used respondents' ratings and a one-sample *t*-test, its results establish statistically significant differences from the test value rather than independently proving that technology caused improvements in students' actual Economics examination scores. Therefore, schools should combine technology-supported assessment with adequate ICT facilities, student orientation and teacher training to support fair assessment and improved academic outcomes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that trained invigilators and technological innovations are important in promoting examination integrity and improving students' achievement in Economics in Senior Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria. Effective invigilation, the adoption of appropriate technologies and the provision of ICT facilities are essential for reducing examination malpractice and strengthening examination administration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School administrators and examination bodies should organise regular training programmes for invigilators to strengthen their examination supervision skills, enforce examination regulations and minimise examination malpractice among Economics students in Senior Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria.
2. Government and examination bodies should provide and integrate appropriate technological innovations, such as computer-based testing, electronic surveillance and biometric verification, into the administration of Economics examinations to reduce examination malpractice and promote examination integrity.
3. Federal and state governments should provide adequate ICT facilities, reliable electricity and internet connectivity to Senior Secondary Schools in North-West Nigeria to facilitate the effective use of technological innovations in Economics teaching, learning and assessment, with the aim of improving students' academic achievement.

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