

STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE CAUSES AND PENALTIES OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF NIGER STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, MINNA

Dantani Isah Sani (Ph.D)
Department of Early Childhood Care Education
Niger State College of Education, Minna
E-Mail: dansan008@yahoo.com
Phone No: +234-806-563-3213

Abstract

This paper examined the student's perception of factors and solutions to examination malpractice in Nigerian colleges of education. The design of the study was survey. Three research questions guided the study all students in the Nigerian colleges of education constituted the population while 400 students of colleges of education Minna were randomly selected as sample. The instrument used to collect data was constructed by the researcher and was face validated by three lecturers in the department of psychology with reliability coefficient of 0.84. The data were analysed using percentages and mean. The findings show among others that all the identified examination malpractices exist, the introduction of micro-chips into the examination halls was found to be the most frequent. Also, the findings revealed that the causes of examination malpractice among others are, lack of adequate preparation by the students, distractions in the college that are non-academic, large population of students in the examination halls and non-coverage of the course content by the lecturers. The penalties are light penalties such as cancellation of the examination involved, at most, rustication for one session. From the findings of this study, it is recommended that there should be improvement in the delivery of instruction especially at the foundation i.e. (primary) level. The use of mobile phones as the new devise for examination malpractice should be curtailed or that the colleges should ban the use of mobile phones in the examination halls.

Introduction

The value and functionality of any educational system lie in its ability to actualize the goals of education. In the educational systems, world over, the examination process makes the difference. The goals of national education systems and indeed national development become like mirage if examination ethics are not encouraged and instituted (Olatunbosun, 2009). Till date, examination is still the best tool for an objective assessment and evaluation of what learners have achieved after a period of schooling. Hence, any action that undermines examinations poses a great threat to the validity and reliability of examination results and certification. Unfortunately, the process of examination in Nigerian tertiary institutions, colleges of education inclusive, has become a "contemporary shame" (Olatunbosun, 2009). This is because of the phenomenon of examination malpractice that has become endemic in the educational system.

Examination malpractice is an illegal or unethical behaviour by somebody in the process of testing an examinees ability or knowledge by means of question (Ikupa, 1997). Similarly, Kibler (1988, as cited in Kibler, 1993) defined examination malpractices as forms of cheating and plagiarism that involve students giving and receiving unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise or receiving credit for work that is not their own. The Examination (Alutu & Aluede, 2006) explains examination malpractice as any act of omission or commission by a person who in anticipation of, before, during or after any examination fraudulently secure any unfair advantage for himself or any other person in such a manner that contravenes the rules and regulations to the extent of undermining the validity, reliability, authenticity of the examination and ultimately the integrity of the certificates issued. Oluyeba and Daramola 1992 (cited in Alutu & Aluede, 2006) remarked that examination malpractice is any irregular behaviour exhibited by a

candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination that contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination.

The major forms of examination malpractice reported are: Impersonation and bringing in foreign materials (books, calculator), substituting worked scripts, stealing, converting, misappropriating scripts, collusion in the examination hall (copying); mass/ organized cheating involving assistance from teachers and outsiders; and insult/assault on supervisors/ invigilators (Oluyeba and Daramola, 1992). This trend in examination malpractices is inimical to academic development and advancement and needs to be drastically addressed.

The hues and cries about examination malpractices which took place at all level of the Nigerian educational system is nothing but a reflection of the society. The Nigerian society is that which celebrates mediocre and view cheats as being smart. The society does not want to know how an individual achieves success. The important thing is the success (Oduwaiye, 2009). In actual fact, examination malpractice is a variant of the corruption in offices, students cheat from primary to tertiary institutions to move from one level of education to another. All sorts of malpractices take place in and around examination venues in order to achieve success. To make matters worse, it is not only students that are involved, parents, lecturers, examination officials, all collude with students to perpetrate this act (Ijaiya, 2004). The collusion between one and more of these agents makes it more difficult to combat. Even the penalties stipulated in Act 33 of 1999 ranging from cancellation of results to 21- year- jail term have failed to achieve any significant shift from the cheating culture (Olaheinde, 1993).

The college of education system evaluates the achievement of students' learning by administering two major types of examinations. Each course is evaluated by continuous assessment test (C.A. Test) and semester examination. These two types of examinations are not spared of malpractices of one type or another. It was a common occurrence to see the list of students expelled from the college of education Minna on account of examination malpractice. It was the intention of this researcher to look into the reasons why students cheat, the forms of cheating and evaluate the penalties for examination as perceived by the students.

There is an array of literature on the factors responsible for examination malpractice in Nigeria. They are students' lack of adequate preparation for examination, poor school facilities, poor sitting arrangement, socio-economic factors (Ijaya 1998;). Other factors identified are certificate syndrome, political – undertone proliferation of private schools, poor invigilation procedure, supervisory role of school administrators (Peter, 2002). Another factor why examination malpractice has not been reduced to its barest minimum is the fact that the penalties for examination malpractice as stipulated in Act 33 of 1999 have not been fully applied. Ijaiya (2004) however felt strongly that as jail term or public execution has not been able to deter armed robbery in Nigeria, a jail term stipulated in Act 33 of 1999 would not stop examination malpractice and so, he advocated for the elimination of the link that exists among the perpetrators of examination malpractice.

On the penalties for examination malpractice, Act 33 of 1999 stipulates cancellation of results, heavy fine as much as N100, 000.00 or a jail term up to 21 years. This act remains a toothless bulldog as many of these penalties have not been implemented. College of Education Minna, (1998) stipulates a number of penalties such as rustication for not less than two semesters to expulsion. All these penalties are to serve as deterrent to students.

Purpose of Study

Considering the magnitude and the continuous occurrence of examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system, it is no doubt necessary to research into this area before the

Nigerian Certificates become worthless papers. Also, in the era of anti-corruption in the Nigerian society, the educational institutions need to join this crusade and totally rid the system of this plague. It was therefore, the intention of this paper is to examine the forms of examination malpractices, the causes as well as evaluate the penalties for examination malpractices in Nigerian Colleges of Education using Niger State College of Education as a case study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study

1. Which are the most frequently used examination malpractice in Nigerian colleges of Education?
2. What are the factors responsible for examination malpractice in Nigerian Colleges of Education?
3. What are the solutions to these examination malpractices?

Methodology

The population of this study included all the students of Niger State College of Education, Minna. The study sample consisted of 400 students randomly selected across schools and directorates. Fifty students were sampled from six (6) schools and two (2) directorates. That is, the schools of Arts and Social Sciences, school of languages, school of technical education, school of education, school of sciences and school of vocational education. The directorates are directorate of pre-NCE and directorate of university affiliated programmes (DUAP). The instrument used to collect data was Questionnaire on Students Perception of the Causes and Penalties of Examination Malpractice (QSPCEM) constructed by the researcher and was face validated by three lecturers in the department of psychology with reliability coefficient of 0.84. It had three parts A, B and C consisting of 11, 10 and six items respectively. Section A requires the respondents to rank 11 forms of malpractice according to their frequency of occurrence while part B identifies 10 factors responsible for examination malpractices using four-point likert rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Section C also called for respondent's agreement or otherwise on the penalties. The data were analysed using percentages, mean and presented in tables. The mean of 2.50 was taken as the average mean; therefore items with a mean of 2.50 and above were accepted while those below 2.50 were rejected.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Result of a rank order by student's of the types of examination malpractice

S/N	Type of Malpractice	Freq	%	Rank
1	Introducing micro-chips into examination venue	232	58	1
2	Collusion with other students	15	3.75	4
3	Collusion with invigilators	15	3.75	4
4	Spying on another students examination scripts	30	7.5	3
5	Impersonation (i.e) making another person to write examination	10	2.5	7
6	Bringing into examination venue prepared answer scripts	13	3.25	6
7	Taking away answer scripts from examination venue without submission	10	2.5	7
8	Undue advantage from course lecturer i.e leakage	10	2.5	7
9	Use of mobile phones to communicate answers among students	10	2.5	7

10	Exchange of question paper/answer scripts containing handwritten information during an examination	10	2.5	7
11	Lecturers assisting students during and after examination	45	11.3	2

All the respondents agreed that the identified types of examination malpractice exist in the Nigerian Colleges of Education. 58% of the students ranked and agreed that introduction of micro-chips into examination venue was the most commonly used type of examination malpractice. Lecturers assisting students during and after examination were ranked second by 11.25% of the respondents. This goes along way in explaining why you see students loitering around staff offices even after the examinations. Spying on another student's examination scripts was ranked third while collusion with other students and invigilators were ranked fourth. Bringing into examination venue prepared answer scripts was ranked sixth while taking away answer scripts from examination venue without submission, impersonation (i.e) making another person to write examination, undue advantage from course lecturer i.e leakage, use of mobile phones to communicate answers among students and exchange of question paper/answer scripts containing handwritten information during an examination had the same ranking.

Table 2: Students' Perception of the Causes of Examination Malpractice

S/N	Factor	Mean X	Decision
1	Students are not well prepared for the examination	3.05	Accepted
2	There are a lot of distractions in the examination venue	2.3	Rejected
3	There are many distractions in the college that are non-academic	3.03	Accepted
4	Supervision is not effective in examination halls	2.4	Rejected
5	Students population is too large for the invigilators	3.17	Accepted
6	The sitting arrangement is too close and not adequate	3.05	Accepted
7	Students wants to pass despite their weak academic performance	3.15	Accepted
8	Lecturers do not cover the course content	2.9	Accepted
9	It is a practice to cheat	2.35	Rejected
10	Poverty of parents	2.45	Rejected

Table 2 reveal that factors 1, 3 5, 6, 7 and 8 are responsible for examination malpractice in the college of education Minna. it is clear that one of the major causes of examination malpractice is the fact that students want to pass despite their weak academic performance($x=3.15$). This is as a result of emphasis placed on certificates in Nigeria. This is strongly linked to item eight which has to do with lecturers not covering the course content. Also, large population was accepted as a major cause of examination malpractice ($x = 3.17$). Another factor accepted by student as the cause of examination malpractice is the inadequacy and closeness of the sitting arrangement. Furthermore, students' ill-preparedness for the examination as well as many distractions that are non-academic were accepted by students as factors causing examination malpractice. It has been observed that majority of the students spend more time on activities that are non-academic such as student's social and political activities, travelling and student's politics at departmental, school and student union levels. These activities take them away from lectures and when they find out that the semester has run out they begin to look for how to cut corners. Student's perception of the penalties for examination malpractice is shown on table 3.

Table 3: Students perception of the penalties for examination malpractice

S/N	Items	Mean X	Decision
1	21 years of imprisonment is appropriate	2.36	Rejected
2	Refer to the law court as it is a criminal case	2.64	Accepted
3	Cancellation of the examination involved	2.65	Accepted
4	Rustication for a semester or session	2.64	Accepted
5	Expulsion from the college	2.3	Rejected
6	Payment of heavy fine as much as fifty thousand naira	2.21	Rejected

Table 3 reveals that students disagreed to heavy penalties for examination malpractice. They rejected imprisonment for a period of 21 years, heavy fine as much as fifty thousand naira and expulsion from the college. They perceived that rustication for a semester or session would reform rather than a damaging penalty such as expulsion from the college, knowing that such penalty may be the end of a student's education. Student's response indicated preference to cancellation of such examination or reference to the law court.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study revealed students perception of the causes of examination malpractice with large population as being the major factor/cause. They perceived that the following penalties given by the college are accepted. The penalties are cancellation of the examination involved, rustication for a semester or session and referral to the law court as it is a criminal case. The 21 years imprisonment, payment of heavy fine as much as fifty thousand naira and expulsion from the college was perceived to be too harsh for students.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made towards curbing examination malpractice to barest minimum.

- (i) Many students who engage in examination malpractice have been found to be academically weak which are traceable to the school foundation in their educational ladder. It is recommended that there should be improvement in the delivery of instruction especially at the foundation i.e. primary level.
- (ii) School facilities in term of sitting arrangement and halls have been a major cause of examination malpractice. The Colleges should guide against indiscriminate admission of students so as not to overstretch the facilities available. There should be good environment like good ventilation, good examination chairs and adequate spacing between students. A lot of temptations to cheat exist when seats are too close to one another. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is waging war against overpopulation in the Nigerian Colleges of Education. Colleges should continue to admit students based on the facility available.
- (iii) The use of mobile phones as the new devise for examination malpractice should be curtailed. The colleges should ban the use of mobile phones in the examination halls.
- (iv) The integrity of the college of education lecturer is important in curbing examination malpractice. Undue familiarity which can make some students to have advanced Knowledge of the examination should be totally discouraged.
- (v) The invigilators should be very vigilant in their supervision of examination and should be fair to everyone. The question of double standard should not be mentioned.
- (vi) Niger State College of Education, Minna should mount campaigns more frequently on the ills and penalties of examination malpractices until the evil is totally stamped out of our educational system.
- (vii) There should be adequate monitoring/supervision by the college management to ensure that lecturers cover the course content, also, non-academic activities such as unionism

activities should be reduced to cut down unnecessary distractions in the colleges of education in Nigeria.

References

- Aaron, R. M. (1992). Student academic dishonesty: Are collegiate institutions addressing the issue? *NAPSA Journal*, 29: 103-113.
- Alutu, A. N. G. & Aluede, O. (2006). Secondary school students' perception of examination malpractices and examination ethics. *Journal of human ecology*, 20(4).
- Ijaiya, N. Y. S. (2004). *Agents of examination malpractice in Nigerian public examinations: Who is the strongest link?* Paper presented at the 7th National Conference of the National Association of Educational Researchers and Evaluators (NAERE) held at Unilag, 21 st-24th June, 2004.
- Ijaiya, Y. (1998). Eradicating examination malpractices: A macro-theoretical framework option. *Nigerian Journal of Development Issues*: 2(2), 72 - 85.
- Ikupa, J. C. B (1997). Causes and cure of examination malpractices. *The Business Administrator*, 1(1), 38- 39.
- Kibler, W. L (1993). Academic dishonesty: A student development dilemma. *NAPSA Journal*, 30, 252- 260.
- Niger State College of Education (2010). *Guidelines on the conduct/invigilation of examination and penalty for misconduct and malpractices*. Minna
- Oduwaiye, R.O. (2009). Students perception of factors and solutions to examination malpractice in Nigerian Universities: A case study of University of Ilorin. *Ilorin Journal of Education*.
- Olasehinde, F. A. O. (1993). Cheating in examinations in the University of Ilorin: Styles, causes and remedies. *Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations*, 4(1), 16 – 22.
- Olatunbosun, J. B. (2009). Examination malpractice in secondary school in Nigeria: What sustains it. *European Journal of Educational Studies* 1(3).
- Oluyeba, N. F. & Daramola, S. O. (1992). *Incidences and detection of examination malpractices in Nigerian public examinations*. Paper presented on behalf of WAEC on Examination Malpractices, University of Benin, Benin city, Nigeria
- Peter, E. (2002). Research uncovers students' tricks in examinations. *The Punch*, p.42.