



Impact of Examination Malpractice on University Education in Nigeria

Stella Ofor-Douglas

Department of Educational Management

Faculty of Education

University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

stellaofor031@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper deals with the impact of examination malpractice on university education in Nigeria. Through university education, products (students) are groomed to take on challenges, jobs, and the likes so as to contribute to the development of Nigeria. The university sets up examinations to test these students on what they have learnt and also to determine the efforts of lecturers in doing their jobs. These examinations require hard work on the part of students to pass them. However, some miscreants have resorted to devious means in passing these examinations. Examination malpractice refers to the poor examination conduct before, during and after an examination so as to pass without any hard work. The aim of this paper is to determine the impact of examination malpractice on university education in Nigeria. The objective is to provide possible ways of curbing the problem of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities. The paper gave some forms of examination malpractice in the university to include impersonation, sorting, toilet visits amongst others and the possible causes of examination malpractice which include laziness on the part of students, fear of failure, the desire for money, etc. The paper also gave the consequences that the universities and the nation as a whole would face as a result of examination malpractice in the universities in the country. Conclusions were made and possible solutions to the problem of examination malpractice were provided to include proper training of invigilators, installation of CCTV cameras in examination halls, adequate punishment for offenders, proper training of invigilators, amongst others.

Keywords: Impact, Examination, Examination Malpractice, University Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Examination malpractice serves as one of the many ills in which the Nigerian society faces in her university education system. The first recorded case of examination malpractice occurred in

1914 during the Cambridge Local Examination where papers were leaked before the scheduled date of the examination (Anzene, 2014). Examination malpractice which started very small has evolved at an alarming rate since it began in 1914 as students have adopted new ways of engaging in it. Examination malpractice is so pronounced that in virtually every examination at all levels there is examination malpractice (Olatunbosun, 2011; Folarin, 2013; Anzene, 2014; and Olurenmi 2014). Omeri (2012) posited that the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria is so high that it rated number one in the world's examination malpractice index. The most disturbing aspect of it is that; parents, teachers and leaders who are supposed to join the crusade against examination malpractice are instead aiding and abetting it one form or the other (Aderogba, 2011; Okorududu, 2013). Examination malpractice has grave consequences for the society; thus, it is necessary to discuss this issue and a way forward from it.

Examination

Anzene submitted that examination is a formal test of one's knowledge or ability in a particular subject especially by means of answering questions or practical exercises. This implies that examination involves the use of tests. It also suggests that students are evaluated or tested to find out the quality of knowledge they have acquired within a specific period of time. George and Ukpong (2013) posited that examination is the most common tool around which the entire system of education revolves, it is the instrument used to decide who is permitted to move to the next academic level. Hornby (2000) in Onyeachu (2012) opined that examination is a written, spoken, or practical test at school or college, especially an important one that you need in order to get qualification. Oduwaiye (2014) mentioned that examination is an organized assessment technique which presents individuals with a series of questions or tasks geared towards ascertaining the individual acquired knowledge and skills. Emaikwu (2012) asserted that examination is a part of evaluation in education and is aimed at determining a learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after a given training. Babalola (2010) pointed out that the quality of graduates depends on excellence in education, especially in conduct of examinations, grading and recording of marks. Onyechere (2004) as seen in Emaikwu views examination from the macro level of analysis. He explained that the Nigerian society, as it is presently constituted, is but one that is founded on faulty and fragile education, political, economic, physical and social environment which cannot produce a better tomorrow.

Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice refers to a corrupt practice within the university education system whereby students carry out acts which are against the conduct of an examination, prior, during or after an examination, in order to obtain satisfiable results. Dimkpa (2011) observed that examination malpractice is the commonest form of the corrupt practice in the Nigerian school system from pre-primary to the tertiary level of education. Examination malpractice is an academic crime committed before, during, and after examination by means of deviant approach to guiding principles of conduct of examination (Ada, 2011). Olayinka (1993) cited in Queensoap and Dogitimiye (2013) viewed examination malpractice as a misconduct before, during and after an examination with the view to obtaining good results. He noted that examination malpractice is on the increase in Nigerian educational system with parents, teachers, students, and examination bodies etc. as perpetrators. Queensoap and Dogitimiye (2013) noted that the social value of the Nigerian environment, which places so much emphasis on paper qualification, has been a major cause of examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system. Dada (2014) corroborated the above definition as he opined that, examination malpractice is any behavior by candidate

or anybody saddled with the responsibility of conducting the examination; that goes against the conduct of such examination; before, during and after examination. Omeri submitted that the rate of examination malpractice in Nigeria is so high that it rated number one in world's Examination Malpractice index. Onyenma (2012) maintained examination malpractice as any form of illegal and authorized assistance given to a candidate or student in an examination. To Ifeakor and Anekwu (2010) examination malpractice is an improper act or advantage; it is a massive and unprecedented abuse of rules and regulations pertaining to items, through the taking of such examination, their marking and grading, to the release of the result and issues of certificates.

Education

Education refers to the process of teaching and learning. It also refers to the transfer of knowledge and values from one person to another. Asaju and Sunday (2014) submitted that education is a process of teaching and training in schools for the development of knowledge and skills, preparing the individual for functional living in the society. Education has often been described as the bedrock for national development of every nation (Ray-offer & Onyezere, 2013). Onyeson and Umoeshiet (2013) agreed that education today, must have the effect of making it possible for a country to have a steady supply of highly creative citizens, who help to improve the living conditions of the general citizenry and to solve the existential problems that are thrown up from time to time. Tuemi (2016) gave the meaning of education as the transmission of what is worthwhile to those who become committed to it and must be lived or acted out to qualify the person as having acquired education. Duru (2011) observed that education comprises of all the series of instruction and discipline which are intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youths, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. Anwar and Saha (2017) declared that education makes man a right thinker and a correct decision maker, which means it exposes man to think extensively and critically. Sahu (2013) argues that education, as provided for in various constitutions and international conventions is supposed to be a fundamental human right that should be the responsibility of government. Ada (2012) submitted that education is a tool for self-development and the development of the society. Usoro (2016) asserted that education is the vehicle through which the human societies preserve, sustain, and transfer their cultural values and ideals for the growth and development of the society; to improve the standard of living of the society. Asuka (2014) maintained that education does only hold the key to modernization or development of society, but it is the king of all the academic disciplines, social institutions of society and the key to human happiness and good society. To Asuka, the future of Nigeria lies in getting it right in her educational system. Akaranga and Ongong (2013) opined that education is a necessary process through which young adults are equipped to lead productive lives according to their talents and interests. Akpo (2015) posited that education is the process of facilitating knowledge through the transfer of skills, values, beliefs, and habits under the guidance of educators through the learners may also educate themselves in a process called autodidactic training. Akpo also maintained that education is the acquisition of knowledge planned or unplanned which enhances the all-round development of human potentials for the good of the individuals and his general society. Akarowhe (2017) asserted that education is the process of transfer of positive skills, values and inclination towards values that are desirable to the society and would bring about self-awareness, self-orientation and self-reliance. Okojie (2013) mentioned that education is a process for manpower development which is necessary for the achievement of rapid growth and development in any country. Farooq (2012) maintained that

education is a process in which and by which the knowledge, characters and behaviour of human beings are shaped and moulded. Boyne (2012) asserted that “no longer is there the dominant view that education is primarily about the development of the person and the creation of a virtuous society. It is about the development of the market.

University Education

University education is education obtained after the secondary school level. The purpose of the university is to train future leaders who will be politicians, educationist, lawyers, engineers, doctors, and scientist etc. The purpose of university education is for teaching, learning, research, community, and skill development. The lofty goals of university education are to be achieved through teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, services to community, skill development and a storehouse of knowledge.

Benefit of University Education

The following are benefits of university education in Nigeria cited in Ofor-Douglas (2020):

- Individuals are required to have degrees for a wide range of careers such as medicine, education, engineering, accounting and law and the university provides for the obtainment of such degrees.
- University education will help an individual to succeed in today’s workforce and establish an enjoyable career of his/her choice
- The job market is extremely competitive, and employers require the services of skilled employees to work for them. This skill can be developed in the university

Examination Conduct

This refers to the ways/behaviour students should adopt before, during and after an examination. The following are to be read to by students before the commencement of any examination:

- Students should have ID cards hanging around their necks before entering the examination hall. These ID cards should contain a passport photograph of the wearer, his/her name, and matric number.
- Before entering the exam hall, students should line up and be properly searched by invigilators and security personnel.
- Students are expected to sign in before the commencement of the examination and also sign out when done with the examination.
- Once inside the examination hall, no student should leave the examination hall except for emergency situations. If a student needs to visit the toilet during the examination, he/she should be timed and also be accompanied by a security personnel.
- No student is allowed to borrow writing materials in the examination hall. Students are expected to bring all the writing materials needed to write the examination into the examination hall.
- No students should tear any part of their answer sheet.

- Students should start the examination at the situated time and end when they are told to stop. Anyone caught writing after being told to stop would have his/her paper seized.
- When done with the examination, students should quietly leave the examination hall and its surrounding premises.

Forms of Examination Malpractice

The following forms of examination malpractice are adopted by students prior, during and after examinations:

- Leaking of examination questions before the commencement of the examination. This can either be done by students or teachers.
- Carrying bullets/chokes into the examination: This refers to when students carry small pieces of paper which contain the answers to the examination questions into the examination hall. This is done either by placing the paper into their shoes, suit pockets, etc. Bruno and Obidigbo (2012 :200) called it ‘Pengo’, and they described it as the most common form of malpractice which entails coming into examination hall with small pieces of paper full of tiny written materials. Ndifon and Ndifon (2012:329) explained that microchips have to do with small pieces of extraneous materials imported into the examination hall.
- Formation: This occurs when a group of students all agree to sit in a particular order so that they can easily whisper the answers to the examination to each other.
- Giraffing: This occurs when students stretch their necks to view the answers of the student sitting in front or beside them. Issa (2012) opined that giraffe is an age-long form of examination malpractice, whereby candidates or students to look into another person’s work in order to copy.
- **Graffiti:** Bruno and Obidigbo explained that this form of examination malpractice is also done by ‘grafting’ or spying on a neighbour’s work, whispering of answers, scribbling answers on desks, tables of examination rooms, ceilings and cloths. Writing the answers of the examination on the tables, chairs, writing materials etc.
- Use of electronic devices: This occurs when students taking an examination bring in electronic devices such as phones, electronic watches, etc, to the examination hall in order to cheat during the examinations. Bruno and Obidigbo asserted that mobile phones are now used to penetrate examination malpractice. Nnam and Inah (2015) stated that old forms of examination malpractice in Nigeria have either ebbed away or have been deftly supplanted by more sophisticated and scientific ones. Their survey report shows that an acceptable mean score of 3.6 indicated that the use of mobile phones during examination is common in Nigeria.
- Sorting: This occurs when students pay off lecturers to assign high scores to them which they did not deserve. This is done by either payment of cash or kind, sexual favours, etc.
- Toilet visits: During the examinations, students feign that they want to use the toilet but instead enter to read textbooks they had placed in the toilet stalls prior to the examination.
- Impersonation: This is a situation whereby a person other than the examination candidate writes the examination under the pretence that he/she is a candidate for that examination. Issa (2012) submitted that a mercenary is considered as the intellectual giant who takes examinations for the person who has engaged his services. Ndifon and Ndifon upheld that a major difference between mercenary (impersonation) and other forms of examination malpractice is that the actual candidates in question perpetrate other kinds of malpractice while mercenary

involves the recruitment of an external body to take or sit the examinations on behalf of the bonafide candidate.

- **Designers:** A recent study on this area revealed the at major forms of examination malpractice include collusion to cheat or copy from fellow students/candidates, possession of different “foreign materials” during examination, continuous assessment malpractice, script swapping and leakages, cloth-writings, among others Emaikwu .

Causes of Examination Malpractice

Common causes of examination malpractice in universities in Nigeria include:

- **Fear of Failure:** The Nigerian society places value on certificates thus students do anything to gain those certificates, either by hook or by crook. The fear of failing would make them anxious thus causing them to engage in the heinous act of examination malpractice.
- **Greed on the part of the lecturer:** This is another major cause of examination malpractice in Nigeria. In order to get extra money, some lecturers aid students in the examination hall. Some even sell the examination papers the day before the examination takes place. Some even collect extra money to increase the examination scores of students.
- **Laziness:** Some students in Nigerian universities do not want to work hard and therefore look for easy ways to succeed. These students fail to attend classes, take notes, or even do assignments. Thus, when it is time for examinations, they want to pass by all means, either by hook or by crook.
- **Attitude of the lecturer towards students:** Some lecturers in the university have a poor attitude when teaching the students. There is no motivation on the part of the lecturers to the students thus the students end up not learning anything. This would result to the students engaging in examination malpractice.
- **Peer Pressure:** Some students actually do not want to participate in examination malpractice, but they are influenced by their bad friends who have not been caught and who are passing examinations easily. Thus, they are convinced by their friends that the quickest way to success in an examination is through examination malpractice.
- **Poor examination preparation:** He who fails to plan, plans to fail. Students who do not prepare adequately for their examinations would no doubt fail them. Thus, they resort to examination malpractice to avoid failure in their examinations.
- **Inadequate library/laboratory facilities:** This refers to a situation whereby laboratory and library facilities in the universities are not provided or are not enough to accommodate the students in the university. Thus, the students will not learn properly and would resort to examination malpractice so as not to fail their examination.
- **Absence of Supervision:** Diksha (2016) posited that supervision is a planned programme for the improvement of teaching and learning. Otokunefor (2011) argues that poor quality of graduates is due also to failure of university supervisory agencies. Where there is poor supervision in an examination hall, there would be an opportunity for students to engage in examination malpractice.
- **Brain Drain:** Ogenyi and Ugwu (2017) stated the mass departure of Africa’s intellectuals and skilled populations to western nations which is called “brain drain” has

been one of the greatest obstacles to the development of African countries which has resulted to suffering from the shortage of professional and skilled individuals necessary for the advancement of the nation's capital. Where those that are adequately qualified to lecture in universities leave the country for greener pastures, the unqualified ones are left, and they do not teach the students well.

- **Parents choosing their children's courses:** This is very common in a typical Nigerian household. Parents choose professional courses like Law, Engineering, Medicine amongst others for their children as they believe that they would be more successful if they have careers in these disciplines. Sometimes, their choices are accepted by their children but most times, their children want nothing to do with these courses as they may find them difficult. Thus, in order not to disappoint their parents, they resort to examination malpractice to pass their examinations.

Consequences of Examination Malpractice

Eckstein (2003) cited in Onyenyi and Ugwu opined that corruption in the school system is due to increasing participation of the populace in the formal education, competition to gain credentials for occupation. Odu (2013) noted that examination malpractice which had existed at a very low ebb with simplistic methods, became more pervasive from 1970, with the involvement of persons other than the candidates and its spread has been wild and fast since then with constant perfection of people as perpetrators of the method adopted. Onwe, Opa and Ugadu (2013) observed that examination malpractice leads to low quality education. Onyechere (as cited in Asoro (2014) maintained that those who engage in examination malpractice to pass school certificate examination pose greater danger to the nation today. Examinations malpractice may lure some students into other areas of misconducts such as prostitutions and or armed robbery, female students who lack money to sort or pay for scores may resort to prostitution while the males may as well take stealing or armed robbery in a bid to make money to pay for scores (Onyechere; Adewale, 2014; Uzochukwu, 2015).

The author was able to provide the following consequences of examination malpractice:

- Examination malpractice can lead to expulsion of the offender.
- It can bring shame to the individual and his family.
- Empty-headed graduates who cannot defend their certificate in the labour market will be produced.
- Examination malpractice can diminish academic morals and values.
- One who engages in examination malpractice is laying a faulty foundation for his future career path.

Factors Facing the Eradication of Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Universities

- **Inadequate Funding:** This serves as one of the major problems facing the complete eradication of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities. Ogonnaya (2012) asserts that funding involves the provision of physical cash, credit facilities, that is trade credits, bank credits, allowances or discounts received, differed expenses such as differed taxes, rents, rates, bill, undistributed profits in the form of retained earnings, reserves,

depreciation provisions, and others. Ololube, Agbor, Major, Agabi and Wali (2016) further stated that inadequate funding of higher education creates room for weak infrastructures, poor maintenance of school buildings, office blocks, classroom blocks, student hostels, staff quarter, etc. If there is inadequate funding, library facilities, laboratory facilities and other facilities required for learning cannot be provided and thus there would be numerous cases of examination malpractice in the university.

- **Greedy Staff:** Some university staff have this get-rich-quick mindset and thus resort to aiding students with the heinous act of examination malpractice. If these greedy staff are not identified and removed from the university, there's no stopping occurrences of examination malpractice.
- **Poor Morals:** Most Nigerians lack good morals and uphold evil deeds instead of good ones. They do not mind resorting to dubious means to get what they want. With poor morals being praised and good morals being undermined in the society, there is no eradicating examination malpractice in Nigerian universities.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY: In our everyday interactions with other people, we use hundreds and thousands of symbols to communicate and to work together. 'By this interaction of symbols we evaluate each other ourselves, and our society'.

- Symbolic interaction is interaction between individuals or groups that involves the use of symbols for communication .Symbolic interactionism or symbolic interaction theory is a view of society as a product of interacting individuals , who create a social and cultural context as they perceive , interpret, react to, alter their immediate social situations by the meanings they give to those situations. A symbol is a conventional sign that derives its meaning from usage and agreement- e.g. language, national flag, etc.
- In relation to this topic impact of examination malpractice on university education in Nigeria, signs and symbols are used as a form of communication to cheat in the exam.
- Another theory known as socialization theory propounded by Billingham (2007) is an approach to understanding the means by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as a functional member of their society. It was further theorised sociologist use the term to refer to the lifelong social experiences by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. Unlike other living species, humans need socialization within their cultures for survival. Society has nurtured society to be useful but some students out of influence of peers have deviated.

CONCLUSION

Examination malpractice is one of the greatest ills of the university as it not only affects the university but the nation as a whole. The paper was able to provide some forms of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities to include the leaking of examination questions before the beginning of the examination, giraffing, formation, use of electronic devices, toilet visits, amongst others. The paper also provided some common causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities to include fear of failure, laziness, peer pressure, inadequate library facilities, poor quality lecturers, amongst others. It is quite unfortunate that some parents and staff who are supposed to encourage good morals and values have aided students in this gross misconduct. If this menace continues, the nation is in grave danger as the university educational system in the country will be ruined.

Way Forward

Usman as cited by Nsisong (2011), maintained that if the staff, that is, all of who have to do with examinations—examiners, typists, custodians, staff of examination bodies, printers, transporters, and security agent put their house in order, students would not have access to examination materials before examinations. The author was able to proffer a way forward from the problem of examination malpractice in universities in Nigeria:

- CCTV cameras should be installed inside the examination hall to deter students from engaging in examination malpractice;
- The punishment for examination malpractice should be spelt out so as to deter students from engaging in examination malpractice;
- Invigilators should be properly trained;
- Adequate punishment should be given to students who engage in examination malpractice to deter others from doing same;
- Lecturers should motivate students to work hard to pass their examinations;
- Adequate facilities such as books, computers, and other research materials should be provided in the library;
- Adequate supervision should be provided to monitor the activities of both the staff and students;
- Examination scripts should be remarked to ensure that the marks are authentic;
- Students should be reminded of the consequences of examination malpractice and its effects on the society;
- Value orientation should be inculcated in the university curriculum;
- Parents should be cautioned not to aid their children in engaging in examination malpractice;
- Lecturers should try as much as possible to finish the scheme of work so as not to give surprise questions in the examination.

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