

THE INVESTIGATION INTO EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE AMONG SCIENCE STUDENTS IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The study dealt with the investigation into examination malpractice in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The survey research design was adopted for the study and two hundred (200) students were randomly selected as the sample size. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. Mean was used to analyze the collected data for the study. The result of the analysis showed that fear of failure, incompetency of some lecturers, societal preference for paper qualification, unseriousness of students, high number of carryover and desire of parents to have their children in choice professions were recorded as the causes of examination malpractice. Impersonation, collusion, bringing of foreign materials into the examination hall, sorting, leakage of examination question papers and answers booklets, use of cell phones and re-writing of examination question after the time schedule were found to be the methods of examination malpractice. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Investigation, Examination Malpractice, Science Students, tertiary Institution

Introduction

Examination malpractice has become a rampant and global phenomenon, which has led to problems of educational system in Nigeria today. It has eaten deep into every aspect of the economy which makes it an

issue of concern among the government and the governed.

The success of an educational system depends upon the effectiveness of its examination system as it is a fundamental component of teaching learning process

(Suleman, 2015). Examination are arranged to evaluate the academic achievement of students and to know whether they have achieved a standard of academic learning and knowledge. Examinations are considered the basis for promotion to higher classes; a source of motivation for learners for better studies; a basis for prediction about student's future education and job aptitudes. Examination serves as a source for the assessment of students' achievement level and assists the teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and learning methods for future improvement (Shadid, 2007).

According to Adams and Esther (2013), "it is regrettable that in most countries of the world, the examination system is infected with examination misconduct". Consequently students pass out from educational institutions without showing their capabilities to adopt what they learn. Therefore many graduates do not adjust themselves when they connect with practical life. Our examination system is defective and having some flaws as it has failed to produce the desired outcomes in view of the rapid and recent achievement in the fields of science and technology (Shah, 1995).

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Examination is defined as a formal test of some bodies knowledge or ability in a particular subject, especially by means of written questions or practical exercise. Aggarwal (1997) explains the concept of examination as "a test of knowledge acquired, or more generally a means of assessing intellectual capacity or ability".

In Nigeria's formal educational system, examination is the summit of an academic exercise in an institution. For this reason, its sanctity, transparency and conduct largely determines the capability of both the

certificates, and that of the institution. It is perplexing however examination as a means of evaluating students' performance has gradually changed from a fair competition and a true reflection of a student's ability to a non-competitive exercise. References were no longer for hard work but acquisition of certificate.

Odongbo (2012), defines examination malpractice as an act of money doing performed by a student or group of students or any other person with the aim to cheat and get unfair advantage in an examination. Examination malpractice is the utilization of usual ways and approaches to achieve a score or set of scores that is generally beyond the mental capability or the state of preparedness of a student for that examination (Awanbor, 2004).

Likewise, Onuka and Amusan (2008), defines examination malpractice as any dishonest, unlawful or unauthorized act or deed performed by a candidate on his own or in collaboration with others like fellow students, guardians, parents, teachers, head teachers, examination officials, supervisors, invigilators, printers, security officers and any person or group of people before, during or after examination in order to get undeserved and unfair marks or grades.

Dugboe (2002), further stresses that, it is a dangerous monster that is destroying the moral foundation of our society, planting seeds of unethical and criminal values in the fertile minds of youths at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. In addition, it robs the nation of a peaceful and harmonious society where professionalism, ethical values and certificates are a true reflection of sound knowledge and competence.

Despite the importance attached to examination in schools and society at large

and the stringent rules and regulations governing the conduct of examination, the case of malpractice are very prevalent. This is an issue of great concern not only to the survival of our educational institutions especially the sciences but also to many leaders of our country, Nigeria (Asore, 2014).

Student's engagement in examination malpractice constitutes not only a deviant behavior, but also affects the reliability of examination certificate issued to those students who engage in examination malpractice. The sole reliance upon examination results today in Nigeria has made students to see examination certificates as the only way out of their misery. Therefore, they resort to various corrupt practices to achieve success in examination, but will not be able to defend and justify it. From observation, most students facing, their final examination in school upon suffer from pre-examination strain, examination panic and phobia. These factors can eventually push some students to involve themselves in one form of examination malpractice or the other.

However, many causes have been linked to the prevalent cases of examination malpractice. Adekale (1993) identified poor preparation for examinations, low morality, poor school facilities fear of failure, craze for certificate, desire of parents to have their children in choice professions and university, pressure on students to pursue courses for which they have no aptitude and pressure on teachers who want to gain favour of student and overcrowded sitting arrangement as causes of examination malpractice.

Onyechere (2006), found out that fear of failure, inadequate preparation for examination, excessive emphasis on paper qualification and lack of resources for teaching are some of the causes of examination malpractice. Asore (2014) noted

the methods/forms of examination malpractice as impersonation, collusion, copying, brining foreign prepared materials into the hall, giraffing, writing answers/points on tables, chairs, palms amongst others. Submission of multiple scripts, coded sign language bribery, exchanging answer booklets are also forms of examination malpractice according to Nwankwo (2007), Akaranga and Ongong (2013).

Examination malpractice has planted the seed of unethical values in the fertile mind of the students. It has serious implications for the educational system, students, teachers, parents and the school as a whole. Nigeria has been graded with reliability of half-baked graduates, low productivity and poor job performance, certificate racketeering and qualification inflation (Nwaba and Nwaba 2005). The credibility of our certificate becomes questionable internationally. Examination malpractice occurring at all levels of Nigerian educational system constitutes a serious threat, a menace to the entire educational system as well as the socio-economic development of the nation. The educational system must rise above moral decadence since it holds the only hope for the transformation of the youth and for the future of potential, social and economic sanity.

Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of examination malpractice at any level of educational stratum possess the greatest threat to the validity and reliability of any examination and consequently to the authority and recognition of certificate issued. It also possess a great challenge to the societal development as people with false certificate resulting from examination malpractice do not contribute positively to economic growth and development in that they are not productive

and cannot defend their certificates. This however becomes a perennial problem. According to Adams and Esther (2013), “it is regrettable that in most countries of the world, the examination system is infected with examination misconduct”. Consequently students pass out from educational institutions without showing their capabilities to adopt what they learn. Therefore many graduates do not adjust themselves when they connect with practical life in view of the rapid and recent achievement in the fields of science and technology. The numerous examination malpractices among science students of Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe over the years have been a growing concern. Students pay less attention to their study but spend most of their time in worldly pleasure, having an alternative in mind, which is examination malpractice.

This study is therefore geared towards finding the possible causes of examination malpractice and the methods, among science students of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out the various causes and methods of examination malpractice among science students of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe in Anambra East Local Government Area and to proffer strategies to curb this undesirable behaviour.

Significance of the Study

The implementation of these findings will assist school administrators, teachers and guidance counsellors to curb threatening behaviour of the students having known the causes and the various methods they engage in.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the causes of examination malpractice among science students of Nwafor Orizu College of Education?
2. What are the methods of examination malpractice among science students of Nwafor Orizu College of Education?
3. What better strategies should be applied to reduce examination malpractice among science students of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe?

Methodology

Area and Design

The survey research design was used for carrying out the study in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe.

Population

The population comprises of all the students from the seven (7) science departments of the school bot NCE and B.Ed students with a total of 1,114.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample comprises of 322 students which were selected using simple random sampling from the different departments in school of sciences.

Instrument

Instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire and it has two sections namely A and B. Section A contains questions that elicit information on the

personal background of the respondents, which include: name of schools, sex, and department. Section B contained items, which elicited responses on student personal perception and their opinion on the causes and method of examination malpractice and the strategies to curb the menace.

Following each statement was a four-point likert scale in which the respondents were required to indicate their opinion such as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts in science education. They were requested to look at the instrument. Their comments and corrections were adopted.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using mean. The acceptable mean score was 2.50. This implies that every mean score exactly or above 2.50 mean, agrees with the decision rule while score below 2.50 mean disagrees with the decision.

Results

Table I below shows the response by the students on the causes of examination malpractice.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DEC.
1.	Fear of failure	202	46	34	40	322	3.27	Accepted
2.	High premium attached to certificate than lead knowledge	167	83	28	44	322	3.15	Accepted
3.	High number of carry over	156	94	33	39	322	3.14	Accepted
4.	Unseriousness of students	193	69	22	38	322	3.29	Accepted
5.	Too much work load for teachers	40	57	127	98	322	2.12	Rejected
6.	Desire of parents to have their children in choice professions	107	110	48	57	322	2.83	Accepted
7.	Incompetency of some lecturers	103	121	46	52	322	2.85	Accepted

From the table above, it shows that item 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 have the highest mean of 3.27, 3.15, 3.14, 3.29, 2.83 and 2.85 respectively, which shows that fear of failure, high attached to certificate, unseriousness of students, parental influence, incompetence of some lecturers and high number of carryover are the major causes of examination malpractice.

Table 2 below shows the response on methods of examination

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DEC.
8.	Leakage of question papers by the lecturers involved and office staff	55	85	32	28	200	2.84	Accepted
9.	Re-writing of examination question after the time schedule	53	97	38	12	200	2.95	Accepted
10.	Sorting/ bribery by the students	70	90	20	20	200	3.05	Accepted
11.	Entering the exam hall with foreign materials	126	44	19	11	200	3.43	Accepted
12.	Impersonation	133	27	24	16	200	3.39	Accepted
13.	Use of cell phones by students	67	73	30	30	200	2.89	Accepted

14.	Students colliding in the hall/ Girraffing	86	74	20	20	200	3.13	Accepted
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From the above table, it shows that items 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 exceeded the criterion average/mean of 2.5, indicating that leakage of question paper, re-writing of examination after the time schedule, sorting, entering the exam hall with foreign materials, impersonation, use of cell phones and collusion are methods of examination malpractice.

Table 3 below shows that the response of the students on the strategies to curb examination malpractice

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	DEC.
15.	Proper supervision of examination	117	33	22	28	200	3.19	Accepted
16.	Security of examination question papers and answers booklets to avoid leakage	70	80	30	20	200	3.00	Accepted
17.	Low emphasis should be placed on certificate	73	77	27	23	200	3.00	Accepted
18.	School authority should always organize workshops and symposium on the ills of examination malpractice	69	81	27	23	200	2.98	Accepted
19.	Setting up examination disciplinary committee to try offenders	55	95	20	30	200	2.88	Accepted

From the table above, it shows that items 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 exceeded the criterion average/mean of 2.5, indicating that proper supervision of examination, security of examination question papers and answer booklets, organizing workshops and setting up examination disciplinary committee should be upheld.

Discussion

The findings of this study as presented in table 1 shows that fear of failure on the part of the student and the high premium attached to certificate are the leading causes of examination malpractice amongst others. It is not surprising to get this response from the respondents. This is in line with Onyechere (2006) and Adekale (1993) which identified craze for certificate, fear of failure, inadequate preparation for examination, desire of parents to have their children in choice profession as the causes of

examination malpractice. Jaga (2006) also noted that societal – related factors such as they crave for certificate or proper qualification are responsible for examination malpractice. Most students believe that the possession of certificate by any mean is a necessity since certificate serves as a gateway to successful future life. This consequently leads to underachievement in the labour market. This study also supports Ote (2009) who found that student’s attitude and study habit have a significant relationship with their malpractice behaviour in examination.

According to the finding in table 2, entering the hall with foreign materials, impersonation, collusion, use of cell phones, sorting, leakage of question papers and re-writing of examination question after the time schedule are among other things the methods of examination malpractice. This is so, Aroana (2004) reported that most student's higher institution bring foreign materials to examination halls. Similarly, Akaranga and Ongong (2013) noted that methods of examination malpractice as collusion among candidates themselves and between them and officials in charge of examinations, impersonation or misrepresentation, written notes on examination desks, walls, palms, cloths, electronic devices, giraffing, submission of multiple scripts, coded sign languages and bribery. Findings in table 3, shows that examination malpractice can be reduced through proper supervision, ensure security of question papers and answer booklets, set up examination disciplinary committee, organize seminars and workshops to educate students on the need to work hard and imbibe good study habit.

This agrees with Peter and Okon (2013) who reported that students should be properly counselled and guided to develop good reading culture, school authority should organize seminars on the ills of examination malpractice in schools and less emphasis should be placed on paper qualification rather on oral examination. Lawal (2001) recommended that examination malpractice can be reduced by setting up disciplinary committee in various institutions to punish offenders.

Implication of the findings

The result of the present study has serious implication for the educational system, students, teachers, parents and the school as a whole. Examination malpractice has lead to

production of half-baked graduates, and in turn, low productivity and poor job performance. The credibility of our certificates become questionable internationally but most importantly, it can cripple the economy of the nation if not.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Examination malpractice is a cankerworm that portend grave danger for the nation. It has attained a frightening proportion and it is becoming more sophisticated as years pass by. This habit has eaten deep into our society and a nation built on academic corruption, cheating and moral misfits cannot survive.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Parents should be counselled not to aid their children to cheat in examinations by sponsoring them to go for outside (magic centres) waec.
2. Government should review the examination malpractice decree to meet the demand of a more complex dynamic Nigeria society especially dynamic schools that collect money from students, thereby allowing them to engage in this act
3. Good moral values and instructions should be properly calculated into the youth very early in life.
4. Examination supervision should be taught the ethics of proper supervisions
5. Seminars and workshops should be organized for students once every semester to create the consciousness that there is no short cut to success rather hard work pays.
6. There should be proper security of examination question papers and answer booklet to avoid leakages.
7. Emphasis should be placed on oral examinations and group work for the

undergraduate students and less emphasis should be placed on paper qualifications.

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