

THE INFLUENCE OF EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE ON THE MEASUREMENT OF STUDENTS' ABILITY IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this work was to assess the influence of examination malpractices on the measurement of students' ability in Nigerian universities. The design of this research was survey. A sample of 300 students and 100 lecturers randomly selected from four universities in North Central Nigeria was used in this study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. It was affirmed that examination malpractice is caused by undue emphasis on paper qualification, fear of failure and inadequate preparation among other factors. The results also indicated that the major types of examination malpractice being perpetuated in Nigerian universities are bringing in foreign materials, collusion by students to cheat in examination and continuous assessment malpractice by lecturers. It was revealed that examination malpractice could lead to lack of confidence in our educational products, results in half-baked graduates, discouragement of hardwork and reduces the standard of education. The study maintains that the calamity of examination malpractice is not just the havoc it is wrecking in the educational system but the gradual indoctrination of youths into the culture of fraud. It therefore recommends that laws on examination malpractice should be implemented and that guidance and counseling services should be adequately provided in universities to minimize the incidence of examination malpractice.

Keywords: Education, examination malpractice, measurement of ability, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Western education has become synonymous with modern civilization, enlightenment and socialization. This is because the more advanced nations of the world, with their superlative and result-oriented qualitative education had become the unassailable parameters for human transformation, innovation and social change. Education is expected to train the mind of its recipient for effective performance. It equips the individual with the information necessary for high level of human functioning. For an individual to be regarded as an educated person, such an individual is expected to pass through the whole process of examination conducted by a competent and recognized body. Adequate and proper acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills in school subjects and disciplines of study is invariably a function of quality education (Okara, 2012). Examination as part of evaluation is aimed at determining learner's level of skill acquisition or intellectual competence and understanding after some training. This usually enables the teacher to be effectively ready for further teaching

as this form of evaluation is often regarded as a feedback. But when examination is not properly conducted, the chance of the expected feedback is often remote. Consequently, the results of such evaluation lead to wrong decisions and judgment which affect the teacher, the learner, the entire education industry as well as the society. A reality we cannot close our sight to is that no matter how lofty, how enviable, how laudable, how gigantic the education goals are, how relevant the school curriculum is organized, if no provision is made for accurate evaluation of learning progress, all these efforts will be a wasteful venture and nullity (Duze, 2011). Examination could be conducted for the purpose of selection, classification and certification. For examinations to be valid and reliable it has to be administered under conducive and uniform conditions and examinees are made to adhere to the stipulated rules and regulations regarding the conduct of such examinations.

Measurement of ability has always been an important part of the school system that even the habitual absentees normally turn up to school and present themselves for testing on examination days (Emaikwu, 2011). The essence of testing is to reveal the latent ability of examinee. The term ability connotes the characteristics of the examinees that the test is intended to measure. It includes factual knowledge, specific skills and more general skills. For an examinee's ability to be estimated, the examinee has to respond to a sample of questions. A test score based on this sample of questions would be an approximate indicator of examinee's ability.

In Nigeria, the educational system and other system are crises ridden. Experience has shown that Nigerian educational system has degenerated into a decadent, morbid institution plagued with fear of bloody-thirsty secret-cult members, drug driven violence and anarchy as well as rampant cases of examination malpractices. It is not an exaggeration to admit that students have become so wild that they could abduct their teachers and even heads of institutions with impunity and get away with it. The institutions of higher learning can no longer boldly claim to be the citadel of excellence they have hitherto been noted for in Nigeria. The sanctity of examination process has been trivialized and often the process of examination is bedeviled by a lot of malpractices. Research evidence depicts that majority of students who gained admissions into tertiary institutions of recent are products of examination malpractice (Emaikwu and Eba, 2007).

Examination malpractice according to Usman (2005) is cheating in the examination or any intention to benefit or give undue advantage to oneself or another by deceit or fraud, before, during and after examination. Examination malpractice is already becoming a culture in the Nigerian educational scene, this is because the ugly face of examination malpractice is been acknowledged by most parents, students, teachers and even lecturers (Ojerinde, 2010). Students go into examination hall with pistols and daggers 'to take care' of anyone that would forestall them from cheating. At risk are invigilators and question papers and hence the survival of Nigerian system is bleak and grossly threatened. The frequency and scale of occurrence have intimidated average Nigerians to a state of hopelessness and helplessness. The

incidence of examination malpractice has become so endemic that the penalty hitherto meted out to its perpetrators is almost having no statistically significant effects on them. Reliable evidence indicates an astronomical increase in the number of people and institutions involved in this social malaise. Sequel to the frequent cases of examination malpractice, the society is almost losing faith in the certificates awarded by some institutions and examination bodies (Emaikwu and Eba, 2007). Cheating in examination has become so 'internalized and legitimized' that some people now regard it as a normal process of passing examination.

The calamity of examination malpractice is not just the havoc it is wrecking in our educational system but the gradual indoctrination of youths into the culture of fraud. Owing to malpractices in universities, examination results tend to give a false picture of the state of affairs; hence a good number of school graduates cannot defend the grades obtained in examinations (Ada, 2004). A crisis situation is bound to develop in the educational sector, if the trend is not prevented. Malpractices in examinations have become so widespread that almost everyone is anxious about the quality of graduates from the Nigeria educational system; except, the perpetrators of examination malpractices. It has led to the questioning of the validity and reliability of the examinations as well as the authenticity of the results and certificates obtained. Widespread examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Nigeria have led to a situation where the uses of formal examinations as bases for determining the level of candidates' proficiency at absorbing, reproducing and applying knowledge have become impossible. The ugly incidence of examination malpractice accounts for several qualifying examinations that are currently on-going in Nigeria such as post university matriculation aptitude tests, job placement aptitude test, etc, with a view to authenticating the earlier examinations hitherto taken by examinees. Since academic credentials are the only acceptable indices of educational attainment, the school going population now see passing examination as do or die affair. As a result of examination malpractice, most Nigerian graduates cannot even write comprehensive letters, let alone read and understand newspapers. Some university graduates who are products of examination malpractice have become a reserve army of the unemployable (Duze, 2011).

There is a general worry about the poor quality of education in Nigeria. The image of the Nigeria education has been greatly tarnished as a result of examination malpractice which characterizes the nation's institutions of learning. The situation is that the society is gradually losing faith in the certificate awarded by educational institutions (Ogum, 2007). Maduabum (2009) notes that examination malpractices are noticeable in every state of the federation in Nigeria and in all the school system. Uzoagulu (2008) affirms that giraffing, coping from one another and taking textbooks into the examination hall as well as entering the examination hall with handwritten materials are ranked first among other types of examination malpractice. Onyechere (2006) observes with dismay that those involved in examination malpractice employ different methods and these methods come under various code names. Examination

malpractice could be caused by fear of failure, undue emphasis on paper qualification and lack of resources for teaching and teacher-related factors (Onyechere, 2006). Cheating has become a national phenomenon to the extent that forging certificates to gain admission or employment is a usual habit among desperate Nigerians mostly the political class. Several members of the legislative and executive arms of government in the last few years have been accused of certificate forgery in Nigeria and some have fallen from grace to grass. The case of the then Speaker of the House of Representative in Nigeria who claimed to have acquired a degree certificate from University of Toronto but to the utter perplexity of all and sundry, was only a secondary school certificate holder is still fresh in the minds of many Nigerians. The influence of examination malpractice in the society are catastrophic and hence, affect all facets of society, the individual, the home, the school, the government, the private organization and the international community negatively (Obasi, 2009).

Mallum (2009) maintains that if paper qualification is de-emphasized, most of the students will know that there is no gain in obtaining a certificate that cannot be defended. Usman (2005) opines that public enlightenment campaigns should be mounted to expose the ills of examination malpractice. Ajayi (2009) felt that examination malpractice cannot be curbed unless the entire society displays high degree of responsibility, integrity and honesty by fighting this menace with all vigour and rigour it deserves. The aim of this study therefore is to assess the prevalence, causes, and consequences of examination malpractice on the measurement of students' ability in Nigerian universities. The following research questions serve as guide for this study:

1. What is the prevalence of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities?
2. What are the types of examination malpractice being perpetuated in Nigerian universities?
3. What are the causes and influence of examination malpractice?
4. What are the solutions to the problem of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities?

A comprehensive research proposition was formulated for the study, thus, there is no significant difference in the mean perception between students and lecturers on the existence of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities.

METHOD

The design of this research is a survey. The study was carried out in four universities in North Central Nigeria. The population of this study was made up of all the 2010/2011 final year students and all their lecturers in the Faculty of Education in these universities. A total of 3780 respondents formed the student's population for the study. The researcher obtained the information about the population of this study from students' affair units in the four universities. The participants were considered for the study on the ground that they have studied for at least three years and have

gotten enough information about examination malpractices. The sample for this study is made up of four hundred respondents randomly selected from the population of lecturers and students. The sample was made up of 100 lecturers, and 300 students. The sampling technique used in this study was simple random sampling. A structured questionnaire was developed and used for data collection using a four-point rating scale which was anchored on a continuum of strongly agree to strongly disagree with items dealing with the prevalence, causes, consequences and solutions of examination malpractice. Two specialists in the area of measurement and evaluation as well as a psychologist in the Faculty of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi validated the items of the instrument. The specialists were asked to assess the brevity of the items. The comments given by the specialists were strictly adhered to and appropriate corrections effected. The reliability coefficient of the instrument for this study was 0.85 using Cronbach alpha coefficient. The data collected from the subjects were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percentage, while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 5% level of significance. Any item with the mean response of 2.5 and above was considered accepted while an item with a mean below 2.5 is considered to be rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Responses of students and lecturers on prevalence of examination malpractice

Statement	SA	AG	DA	SD	A	S	Remark
Students frequently indulge in examination malpractice	185	116	40	59	3.07	1.07	Accept
Lecturers frequently indulge in examination malpractice	208	118	48	26	3.27	0.91	Accept
Malpractice occurs before, during and after examination	240	110	23	27	3.41	0.87	Accept

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 2: Lecturers' and students' responses on the types of examination malpractice

Statement	SA	AG	DA	SD	A	S	Remark
Leakages	169	160	37	34	3.16	0.91	Accept
Impersonation	139	130	110	21	2.97	0.91	Accept
Continuous assessment malpractice	260	59	35	46	3.33	1.04	Accept
Script swapping	183	129	42	46	3.12	1.00	Accept
Bringing in foreign materials	197	187	10	6	3.48	0.62	Accept
Altering of marks and grades	23	110	27	240	1.79	1.03	Reject
Collusion to cheat/coping from one another	241	150	4	5	3.57	0.58	Accept
Marking malpractice by teachers	49	46	228	77	2.14	0.95	Reject

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 3: Responses of lecturers and students on the causes of examination malpractice

Statement	SA	AG	DA	SD	a	s	Remark
Undue paper qualification	235	148	10	7	3.53	0.64	Accept
Fear of failure	270	100	21	9	3.58	0.69	Accept
Inadequate preparation	180	170	20	30	3.25	0.86	Accept
Lack of resources for teaching	44	96	140	120	2.16	0.98	Reject
Teacher related-factors	37	53	150	160	1.92	0.95	Reject
Society related-factors	261	100	18	21	3.50	0.81	Accept

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 4: Teachers' and students' responses on the influence of examination malpractice

Statement	SA	AG	DA	SD	a	s	Remark
Half-baked graduates	270	110	15	5	3.61	0.62	Accept
Lack of confidence on our educational system	280	90	6	24	3.57	0.80	Accept
High dropout rates from universities	90	110	130	70	2.55	1.02	Accept
Discouragement of hard work	270	96	14	20	3.54	0.79	Accept
Lowers the standard of education	271	112	6	11	3.61	0.66	Accept
Decreases validity and reliability of measurement process	300	68	17	15	3.63	0.69	Accept
Breeds a generation of fraudsters and other social vices	256	121	13	10	3.56	0.80	Accept

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 5: Lecturers and students' responses on the solutions to the problem of examination malpractices in universities

Statement	SA	AG	DA	SD	a	s	Remark
Provision of adequate teaching resources	161	80	70	89	2.78	1.19	Accept
Inculcation of moral values and instructions	262	107	15	16	3.54	0.75	Accept
Reduction of emphasis on paper qualification	221	139	16	24	3.39	0.82	Accept
Guidance and counseling services	235	129	13	23	3.44	0.81	Accept
Implementation of the relevant decrees	180	100	46	74	2.97	0.14	Accept

Source: Survey, 2011

Table 6: Test of difference in mean perception between lecturers and students of the existence of examination malpractice in the universities.

Group	Mean	Standard Dev	N	DF	t-cal	t-critical
Lecturers	3.43	0.82	100			
Students	3.41	0.87	300	398	0.05	1.87

" p 0.05, not significant

Table 6 shows that lecturers have a mean score of 3.43 and standard deviation of 0.82, while students have a mean score of 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.87. Table 6 also shows that the t-calculated value is 1.87 using degree of freedom of 398 at 5% level of significance, the t-critical value of 1.96 is obtained. Since the t-calculated value of 1.87 is lesser than the t- tabulated value of 1.96, the test statistic is not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean perception between students and lecturers on the existence of examination malpractice in the universities is accepted. Any physical difference observed between the mean score of lecturers and students are such that might have arisen from sampling errors or any other variations in the research. There is the need to calculate the *effect size* for this independent sample t-test statistic which yielded a non-significant result. Effect size statistics provide an indication of the magnitude of the differences between the two groups being statistically compared. The procedure for calculating eta squared for the independent t-test statistic on table 6 is provided by the formula:

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (n_1 + n_2 - 2)}$$

From table 6, the t-calculated is 1.87, n1=100 and n2=300, the eta squared could be

calculated by replacing these values in the formula. Hence, the eta squared

$$= \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (n_1 + n_2 - 2)} = \frac{(1.87)^2}{(1.87)^2 + (100 + 300 - 2)} = 0.008709 \approx 0.0087$$

The guidelines for interpreting the values of eta squared are: 0.01 = small effect, 0.06 = moderate effect, 0.14=large effect. In this hypothesis, we can see that the eta value of 0.0087 is a very small effect size. Expressed as a percentage, (thaht is to say, multiply the effect size by 100), only 0.87 per cent of the variance in the lecturer variable could be explained by the student variable. In other words, effect size statistics which provide an indication of the magnitude of the differences between the two groups being statistically compared is only 0.87 per cent.

The first question was set to find out if examination malpractice does exist in the universities. There is clear evidence from the lecturers and student that examination malpractices are prevalent in the universities. The results on table 1 show that 75% of the lecturers and students affirm that students frequently indulge in examination malpractice, while 82% of lecturers and students affirm that lecturers also indulge in examination malpractice. This therefore implies that there is prevalence of examination malpractices in the universities. Meanwhile 85% of lecturers and students equally affirmed that examination malpractice often occurs before, during and after examinations in the universities. These findings collaborate with Maduabum (2009) who reports that examination malpractices are noticeable in every state of the federation in Nigeria and in all the school system. The result also affirmed Duze (2011) submission that since academic credentials are the only acceptable indices of educational attainment, the school going population in Nigeria see passing examination as do or die affair.

Confirming the result of this finding, Emaikwu and Eba (2007) affirmed that research evidence depicts that majority of students who gained admissions into tertiary institutions of recent are products of examination malpractice. Widespread examination malpractices in tertiary institutions in Nigeria have led to a situation where the uses of formal examinations as bases for determining the level of candidates' proficiency at absorbing, reproducing and applying knowledge have become impossible. The ugly incidence of examination malpractice accounts for several qualifying examinations that are currently on-going in Nigeria such as post university matriculation aptitude tests, job placement aptitude test, etc with a view to authenticating the earlier examinations hitherto taken by examinees.

The results of this study revealed that there are different types of examination malpractices in Nigerian universities. Results on table 2 show that the major types of examination malpractice include collusion to cheat/coping from one another, bringing in foreign materials, continuous assessment malpractice, script swapping and leakages among others. Other types of examination malpractice such as altering of marks and grades as well as marking malpractice by teachers have their mean values less than 2.5 and are therefore not considered as the major types of examination malpractice being perpetuated in Nigerian universities in this study. The result of

this study agrees partly with the study conducted by Uzoagulu (2008) who notes that 'giraffing', coping from one another and taking textbooks into the examination hall as well as entering the examination hall with handwritten materials are ranked first as among other types of examination malpractice at all levels of education in Nigeria. The continuous assessment malpractice is frequently practised by the lecturer. Many lecturers hardly mark continuous assessment scripts as students are awarded marks arbitrarily. Students are fond of bringing into examination hall, foreign materials that they feel could assist them to pass examination. This finding is also consistent with that of Onyechere (2006) who observed that culprits employ different methods and these methods come under various code names.

The results on table 3 show that majority of lecturers and students accepted that the causes of examination malpractice include fear of failure, undue emphasis on paper qualification, society related-factors and inadequate preparation; while other factors such as lack of resources for teaching and teacher-related factors were not considered as the major causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities. The findings agree in part with Ozuagulu (2008) who observes that examination malpractice could be caused by fear of failure, undue emphasis on paper qualification and lack of resources for teaching and teacher-related factors. The divergent as of this finding with that of Ozuagulu (2008) is that in this study, factors such as lack of resources for teaching and teacher-related factors were not considered as the major causes of examination malpractice in Nigerian universities. This could be as a result of federal government recent intervention program using education tax fund to provide resources for teaching in universities.

The results on table 4 show that majority of the lecturers and students accepted that the most serious consequences of examination malpractice are decrease in the validity and reliability of measurement process, production of half baked graduates, lowering of academic standard and lack of confidence in our educational system. Other notable consequences include breeding of a generation of fraudsters and other social vices, discouragement of hard work and emergence of high dropout rates from universities whenever offenders are caught by university authorities. The findings agree with that of Ogum (2007) who also noted that examination malpractices make nonsense of our education system and that the credibility of most certificates obtained from Nigerian universities are highly questionable.

Obasi (2009) reports that the influence of examination malpractice in the society are catastrophic and that it affects all facets of society, the individual, the home, the school, the government, the private organization and the international community negatively. The results resonate the report of Emaikwu and Eba (2007) who submitted that students go into examination hall in Nigeria with pistols and daggers "to take care" of anyone that would forestall them from cheating. According to Emaikwu and Eba (2007), at risks are invigilators and question papers and hence the survival of Nigerian educational system is bleak and grossly threatened. The frequency and scale of occurrence have intimidated Nigerians to a state of

hopelessness and helplessness. Duze (2011) was accurately right when he submitted that some university graduates who are products of examination malpractice have become a reserve army of the unemployable in Nigeria. It is obvious today that examination malpractice has introduced some measures of suspicion on our certificates. The situation is that the society is gradually losing faith in the certificate awarded by some educational institutions in Nigeria (Ogum, 2007).

The results on table 5 show that to curb examination malpractice in the universities, there should be emphasis on the inculcation of moral values and instruction, provision of guidance and counseling services, reduction of emphasis on paper qualification, implementation of the relevant decrees and provision of adequate teaching and learning resources. This result is similar to the conclusion researched by Mallum (2009) who submitted that if paper qualification is de-emphasized, most of the students will know that there is no gain in obtaining a certificate that cannot be defended. Usman (2005) on his own part had a contrary view about the solution to examination malpractice but specifically opined that public enlightenment campaigns should be mounted to expose the ills of examination malpractice. Ajayi (2009) felt that examination malpractice cannot be curbed unless the entire society displays high degree of responsibility, integrity and honesty by fighting this menace with all vigour and rigour it deserves.

To curb the incidence of examination malpractice, the society should therefore de-emphasize strict paper qualification for determining the fate of candidates for job placement; government should ensure that strict measure awaits offenders. The result of the hypothesis tested showed that there is no significant difference in the mean perception between students and lecturers on the existence of examination malpractice in the universities. The effect size statistics which provides an indication of the magnitude of the differences between the two groups being statistically compared is only 0.87 per cent. This invariably depicts that the major stakeholders in the school system have consented that there is high incidence rate of examination malpractice in universities in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lecturers and students affirm that there is high prevalence of examination malpractices in universities as the two groups affirmed that examination malpractice often occurs before, during and after examination in universities. However, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean perception between students and lecturers of the existence of examination malpractice in the universities. Based on these, the following recommendations are made:

1. Emphasis should be placed on moral instructions and value re-orientation in our universities to combat examination malpractice. Students should be taught the virtues of hard work, honesty and the dignity of labour.
2. The undue emphasis placed on paper qualifications should be reduced so as to minimize the rate at which students commit examination malpractice to

acquire these paper qualifications. There is the need to identify other alternative ways of assessing students' ability other than conventional examinations. Graduates should be subjected to vigorous tests in the course of seeking for employment so as to assess their abilities and as a means of reducing examination malpractice.

3. The administration and conduct of examination should be entrusted to the care of men and women of proven integrity.
4. Government has enacted the relevant laws on examination malpractice. These laws must be implemented to the later and bitter lessons must be set for students to see so as to serve as deterrent to others.
5. Guidance and counseling services should be adopted in universities so as to reduce cases of examination malpractice.
6. There is need to provide adequate teaching and learning materials. Libraries and laboratories should be stocked with the needed textbooks, chemicals and apparatus for effective teaching and learning.

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