

EXAMINATION. MALPRACTICE: THE CULPRITS' VIEW

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Abstract

This study was designed to find out the reasons given by students caught and interrogated for getting involved in examination malpractice. All the one hundred and nine students involved in examination malpractice during the first semester of 2003/2004 academic year in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin were used for the study. A questionnaire was used for data collection while frequency count and simple percentages were used for data analysis. Findings indicated that lack of information by the college and students' poor attitude to class attendance were the strongest reasons for indulging in examination malpractice. Based on the findings, it was recommended that adequate dissemination of information is necessary. Also counselling is needed to instill discipline and confidence to face examinations in students.

Introduction

Nigeria places a high premium on higher education. This is why the National Policy on Education (1998) states that higher education is one means of attaining technological advancement. This education is usually provided by universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Colleges of education are teacher training institutions where aspiring candidates are taught the rudiments of the teaching profession. For progress in any educational institution, there is a need for examination. It is a means of making progress from one level to another. This is because it is used for assessing skills, competences and knowledge in specific areas of study and academic achievement, thus every individual always desires to pass. According to Olasehinde (1992), the desire to succeed at all costs in examinations has led to various methods of cheating among undergraduates. Incidences of examination malpractice have been

reported regularly in Nigerian educational institutions. Examination bodies such as WAEC and NECO are not left out in the struggle and fight against examination malpractice. According to Kolo (1990), examination malpractice is one plague which has affected the educational system. In the opinion of Olayinka (1996), the issue of examination malpractice is a great problem that has undermined the foundations of education in Nigeria.

Examination malpractice has been a source of great concern to the nation and that is why the Federal Government of Nigeria had enacted decrees, laws and prescribed penalties for anyone found guilty. For instance, Decree 20 of 1984 as amended by Decree 22 of 1986 prescribed 21 years jail term for anybody found guilty of involvement in exam fraud. Despite the decree, examination malpractice which dates as far back as the colonial days is still on the increase. Several authors had identified causes of examination malpractice. Obe (1992) explained that motivation for examination malpractices is candidates desire to succeed by all means. Hassan (1987) outlined some reasons for examination malpractice. These reasons include:

- i. Emphasis on paper qualification.
- ii. Inordinate ambition by students.
- iii. Inability to cope with school work.
- iv. Inadequate supervision.
- v. Lack of moral uprightness and
- vi. High expectation by parents.

Ikpada (1998) also asserted that student-teacher unholy alliance, political instability, disruption of academic calendar, over-pricing of certificate among others are those things that lead to examination malpractices.

Colleges of education are not left out in the fight against this ugly monster called "examination malpractice" The Kwara State college of education, Ilorin during for the 1999/2000, 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 sessions apprehended

140,165 and 152 respectively for involvement in examination malpractice. Incidences regarded as forms of examination malpractice in the college of education include:

- i. Copying other students' answers during the examination.
- ii. Bringing in prepared answer scripts.
- iii. Whispering to the next student in the examination hall.
- iv. Impersonation.
- v. Bringing in jotted points on pieces of paper or other materials.
- vi. Bringing textbooks into the examination hall.
- vii. Scribbling points on the desk used in the examination hall.
- viii. Scribbling points on body parts.
- ix. Insult/assault on the supervisor during invigilation.

This paper aims to find out the reasons given by students caught for their involvement in examination malpractice.

Methodology

The one hundred and nine students caught and interrogated for their involvement in examination malpractice during the first semester examination of the 2003/2004 academic session in Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin were used for the study. Out of the 109 culprits, 47(males = 20, females 27) were in year 1, 32(males 12, females = 20) were in year II and 30(males =14, females = 16) were in year III respectively. A 12-Item questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. The validity and reliability of the instrument were ascertained and the coefficient of reliability of 0.72 was obtained. All the candidates responded to the questionnaire. Frequency count and percentages were used for data analysis.

Result

Reasons given for involvement in examination malpractice by the offenders.

Reasons	Frequency	%
1. Inability to attend lectures regularly	79	64.2
2. Inability to have reading material on subject	47	43.1
3. Lack of knowledge about penalty on malpractice	85	78.0
4. Friends provide encouragement	31	28.4
5. Teachers/supervisors non-vigilance during supervision	39	35.8
6. Ineffective Invigilation	58	53.2
7. Inability to comprehend the subject matter	66	60.5
8. Lack of serious penalty for past offenders	59	54.1
9. Poor sitting arrangement	70	64.2
10. High parental expectation	55	50.4
11. Peer expectation	25	29.9
12. Inability to resume early during semester	68	62.4

Result showed that 64.2% of the respondents indicated inability to attend lectures regularly as the reason for involving themselves in examination malpractice. Inability to have reading material on the course being examined was indicated by 43.1% while 78% indicated lack of knowledge about consequences of involvement in malpractice as their reasons. Other reported reasons for culprits' involvement in examination malpractice in the range of 60-64% percent includes inability to comprehend subject matter, inability to resume school early and poor sitting arrangement. Reasons within the magnitude of 50-55 percent were high parental expectation, ineffective invigilation and lack of serious penalty for past offenders. Those reasons given by between 28-35 percent of respondents include encouragement by friends, high peer expectation and teachers'/supervisors' non-vigilance during examinations. The results showed that if the reasons were ranked, lack of knowledge about penalty comes first while inability to attend lectures regularly and poor sitting arrangement rank second and third respectively. The weakest set of reasons for indulging in examination malpractice is high peer expectation and friends' encouragement which ranked 11th and 12th respectively.

Results also showed that inability to resume early during semester, inability to comprehend subject matter and lack of serious penalty for past

offenders ranked 4th, 5th and 6th respectively. This finding has established that, the college authority is a strong factor in curbing examination malpractice. Inadequate information in any organization is one factor that can make or mar such organization. Again where there are poor sitting arrangements, students could be tempted to cheat.

It was established that the students personally determine their own future as inability to attend lectures regularly and inability to resume early were ranked 2nd and 4th respectively as the reasons for indulging in malpractice. The study further revealed that peer influence is not a strong factor for indulging in exam malpractice. Worthy of note also is the fact that penalties on examination malpractice is not stiff. No single person was prosecuted under miscellaneous offences or decree 21 stipulating 21 year jail term for people involved in examination malpractices since its promulgation. The researcher's observation of the College's code for examination malpractice is that students do not take the penalty serious. This is why there are incidences of malpractice in every end of semester examination.

Although this is a small scale study, it has none the less given insight to reasons why students in the college of education indulge in examination malpractices. Conclusively, indulgence in examination malpractice for whatever reason must be a thing of concern. Based on the discussion above, students are strong determinants of examination malpractice and thus adequate measures must be put in place to create conducive environment for teaching, learning and final testing situation. This is because when examination malpractice occurs, it negates the objective of examination and the worth of certificates earned diminishes. This is why Alonge (2003) rightly observed that the menace of examination malpractice is a long standing global problem and efforts must be directed towards controlling it.

Recommendation

Cases of examination malpractice must not be allowed to continue as it is in the present state if the nation is to build a virile, reliable and prosperous citizenry. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that adequate sitting arrangement should be provided during exams to discourage cheating. This

should be done by spacing the students and/or mixing students of different courses in the same examination hall. It is very important that students should be adequately informed of the consequences of involvement in examination malpractice by the college. This could be done by distributing such penal codes few weeks to the examination period. There is also the need for college authorities to review the penalties for examination malpractice. The penalties should be capable of deterring students from committing examination related offences. Also there is a need for adequate guidance and counselling for the students. This should be done in order to instill acceptable moral values and encourage regular attendance of lectures which would in turn give them confidence to face examinations.

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