

Forms and Factors Supportive of Examination Malpractice among Biology Students in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Downward movement in the standard of Education in Nigeria has been a regular outcry by parents, educators and the government. Our graduates are not fit for workplace, there is a disconnect between the industries and the schools. Students come out with good results but cannot defend such results. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education is a teacher training institute, saddled with the primary responsibility of producing teachers that will teach for academic excellence. Therefore the need to find out the forms and factors supportive of examination malpractice. Four research questions guided the study and a survey design was employed. Using questionnaire and documents from examination malpractice committee. Percentages, mean and standard deviation were employed to answer research questions. It was found out that the most common forms of exam malpractice was paying lecturers, writing under skirts and using microchips and the most common punishment was rustication a semester or session. Findings also show that the female students are more involved. Furthermore, Suggestions towards controlling examination malpractices were given.*

Keywords: Examination, Malpractice, Biology, Learning

1. Introduction

Examinations in Nigeria schools dated back to the advent of formal education in the country (the 1800s) and it was patterned after the British system. In Rivers State Nigerian, examinations are either internal or public; internal examinations are those set by teachers in the form of class tests and end of term or semester examinations while public examinations are the ones that are conducted in the public interest by recognized examining bodies that were not necessarily involved in preparing students for the examinations. The instance of malpractice during examinations has been identified by [16], and [9] to include misrepresentation of identity or impersonation, cheating, theft of other students' work, tampering with the works of others, bringing prepared answers to examination hall, unethical use of academic resources, fabrication of results and showing disregard to academic regulations. These vices have been regarded as academic misbehaviour capable of truncating an educational system [15] and [14]. Examination malpractice can also be regarded as dishonesty in examinations perpetrated by a person or a group of persons. Although some researchers [5], [8] were of the opinion that examination malpractices were generally high amongst students, further search into this issue by the likes of [3] and [12] showed that examination malpractices were a common feature of rural schools. They argued that it is common to find students who failed a particular subject in urban schools, obtaining good results with credits and distinctions in rural schools in public examinations. Some of the reasons given for this include the lack of effective supervision and monitoring of public examinations in rural schools [7]. Hence, students seem to be left to massive cheating in such examinations.

However, examinations play vital role not only in our educational system but also in the society as a whole. In Nigeria, various forms of examinations are noticed. These are the entrance examinations, the terminal and promotion

examinations, the senior school certificate examination and the degree or diploma examinations. Students are required to pass any form of examinations they partake in by studying and preparing adequately. Unfortunately, today's students find various means of achieving success in these examinations void of adequate preparation in terms of reading, group discussions and making sure that writing materials are available. These students rather chose to "succeed" through illegal means like getting examination questions before time (leakage of examination papers), impersonation, external assistance, copying, smuggling foreign materials and substitution of scripts.

The fact remains that examination malpractice has become usual practice among students in various schools in Nigeria. Cheating behaviour exhibited by the school population is a big problem to our people. School administrators were recently called upon to desist from helping their students to perpetuate examination malpractice. Individuals however put the blame on lack of proper social value system, the high premium attached to paper qualification as prerequisite for admission and gainful employment. Candidates who participate in exam malpractice generally perform better in tests and dramatically increase their chances of admission into higher institutes of learning. Because of this, many bright, honest students who attain the entry grade might not gain access to the schools of their choice due to having lower exam scores than those who cheated. Exam malpractice also lead to delays in processing and releasing results. When suspicions arise regarding such malpractices, it takes time to investigate the cases, thus extending the time period for issuing results [22]. Exam malpractice is a serious cankerworm that has negatively impacted the educational system and the society in its entirety. This negativity is reflected in job inefficiency, which is affecting the economic growth of the country. It has also impacted the academic reputation of our educational institutions, as ill-prepared students are less likely to continue to perform at a high level once they are enrolled and might also feel overwhelmed by a

rigorous curriculum. Examination malpractices may occur in different forms before, during and after examinations.

1.1 Forms of Examination Malpractice

There are several forms of examination malpractice which occur before, during and after examination. Listed below are some of the major forms of examination malpractice;

1) **Bringing of foreign materials into Examination Hall**

This is a situation where students bring into the examination hall notes, textbooks and other prepared materials. The method is nicknamed as hide and seek, microchips, tattoo and magic desk. Sometimes, students bring into the hall unauthorized materials like sophisticated scientific calculators.[1]identified some methods like giraffing, contraband, bullet, super print, escort, pregnant biros and so on.

2) **Assistance from Educational Stakeholders**

Educational stakeholders during examinations include parents, teachers, lecturers, security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies. Some parents go to any length in buying question papers for their children while some others even buy certificates for their children. Supervisors collude with teachers, school principals, lecturers and or students by allowing teachers to come around to teach the students during examination period, lecturers or teachers releasing question papers or giving underserved marks or allowing students to illegally re-take examination papers. Security agents, printers and staff of examination bodies also sell question papers [6].

In specific terms we have the following forms that are popular in institutions of higher learning;

- 1) Use of "micro-chip"; writing very tiny summaries on pieces of paper.
- 2) Writing on various parts of the body, clothes, shoes and or other materials within the examination hall.
- 3) "Sorting", in which students negotiate with corrupt lecturers for scores by rewarding the lecturers in cash or kind.
- 4) "ECOMOG/ECOWAS/OAU"; which is an alliance among classmates to communicate via coded language.
- 5) Handheld smart devices such as modern cell phones.
- 6) Impersonation.
- 7) Leakage of questions papers traceable to the printing press or other persons associated with the custody of the papers, including lecturers[7].

It is clear from the various forms of examination malpractice that it is not limited to the time and place of examination. One important example of pre-examination malpractice is in the process of registering candidates for examinations and admission processes. For these forms of examination malpractice to thrive, several factors are supportive of this illegal practices.

1.2 Factors Supportive of Examination Malpractice

The root causes of examination malpractice in Nigeria include the following.

- 1) Nigeria has a deplorable value system, therefore immoral acts such as cheating, dishonesty including embezzlement and stealing of public funds and properties

do not attract the condemnation and punishment they deserve.

- 2) The emphasis on paper qualification or certificate is another cause of examination malpractice[21]. Due to the fact that Nigeria's educational system places so much value and emphasis on certificate instead of knowledge, skills and competence; there is so much pressure from parents and the society for students to have good grades.
- 3) Another major causes of examination malpractice is inadequate teaching and learning facilities such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories and even teachers compared to the population of students. These inadequate resources affect effective teaching and learning.
- 4) Teachers are not well paid which leads to strike actions by teachers at all levels. [18]identified working conditions, societal pressure and poor remuneration as factors that predisposes students and teachers to examination malpractice.
- 5) Other students' vices such as cultism, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity and truancy are also factors encouraging examination malpractice on our campuses as students devote more time to them than their studies.
- 6) Lack of confidence as a result of inadequate preparation[21]. These days, students are no longer hardworking and dedicated towards their academic endeavours. A student who is not well prepared would likely cheat in examination hall in order to pass.

The fact that these situations predispose students to examination malpractice is not a guarantee to get involved in such negative activities. Therefore some disciplinary measures are put in place to punish offenders and afford those planning to get involved the opportunity to have a change of heart and rather study harder.

1.3 Punishment for Examination Malpractice

Punishment for violators of the offences stipulated in the Examination Malpractice Act No. 33, of 1999, ranges from a minimum of fifty thousand naira (N50,000.00) and a maximum of five years imprisonment, without option of fine. As a follow up, the Senate of various universities in Nigeria have approved and released penalties/sanctions for involvement in examination misconduct/malpractice. Such universities include; University of Lagos (UNILAG), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port-Harcourt. The penalties range from rustication for a semester to expulsion from the university, depending of the gravity of offence. Despite implementation of these sanctions and penalties which should serve as deterrent to others, the incidences of examination malpractice still feature prominently in the university system. According to [17] examinations in Nigeria schools have become a "Contemporary shame" because of incessant cases of examination malpractices at all levels. It is against this background that this study seeks to find out the forms of examination malpractices, predisposing factors (factors supportive) of examination malpractices and the most common punishment for getting involved in such act in department of Biology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port-Harcourt Rivers State Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

This research was guided by four research questions

- 1) What are the forms of examination malpractice in biology department of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education?
- 2) What are the factors predisposing biology students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education to exam malpractice?
- 3) What is the most common punishment for involvement in examination malpractice meted on biology students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education?
- 4) Between male and female students who are more involved in examination malpractice in the department of biology?

2. Methodology

2.1. Design

The study employed a survey design to find out the forms and factors supportive of examination malpractice among Biology students in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

2.2. Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 200 – 400 level regular B.Sc.Ed. students in department of Biology during the 2017/2018 session.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Technique

The study employed stratified random sampling in selecting 40 students from each of the three levels in the department of Biology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Giving a total of 120 students used for the study.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection

A Well-structured questionnaire titled “Forms and Factors Supportive of Examination Malpractice Amongst Biology Students (FAFSEMABS)”. The questionnaire had four sections:

- a) General information about respondents (bio-data)
- b) Involvement of examination malpractice with respect to gender
- c) Predisposing factors to examination malpractice
- d) Forms of examination malpractice

Additionally, documents showing reports of Examination malpractice committee of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education were consulted. These documents provided information on reported cases, offence committed and punishment pronounced on the guilty. A test-retest method was employed at an interval of two weeks using 20 students from Biology department of Federal College of Education Omoku to test the reliability of the instrument. Using Pearson Moment correlation coefficient, a correlation value of 0.87 was obtained.

2.5 Method of Data Collection and analysis

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the randomly selected 120 student in year two, three and four of the department of Biology. The duly completed questionnaires were retrieved and the data gathered used for analysis. In addition, documents containing the reports of examination malpractice committee were also studied in other to get information on reported cases, punishment pronounced on the guilty and the gender that is most involved in the unlawful act. Frequencies and percentages were employed in data analysis.

3. Results

3.1 Research Question 1: What are the forms of examination malpractice commonly used by students?

Table 1

S/N	Forms of Examination Malpractice	N=120	F (%)
1.	Micro-chips		100
2.	Giraffing		92
3.	Contraband		48
4.	Bullet		83
5.	Pregnant biro		60
6.	Writing on laps		99
7.	Writing inside the shoe		83
8.	Writing inside the lining of gowns or skirts		100
9.	Sorting lecturers to get question papers before time		66
10.	Paying lecturers to be awarded scores		100
11.	Writing the exams privately		83
12.	Use of textbook in the examination hall		75
13.	ECOMOG		29
14.	Talking to a coursemate in the examination hall when examinations are going on		87

F=Frequency

Table 1 reveals that three methods of examination malpractices are the most commonly used amongst students which includes: Paying lecturers to be awarded scores (F=100), Writing inside the lining of gown or skirts (F=100) and Micro-chips (F=100).

3.2 Research Question 2: What are the factors that predisposes biology students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education to examination malpractices?

Table 2

S/N	ITEMS	N=120	X	SD	D
1.	Inability of lecturers to cover their course outline before examination		3.10	.99071	*
2.	Moving students from one hall to another during examination due to lack of classroom or halls		2.93	1.14300	*
3.	Inadequate preparation by students		3.17	.99860	*
4.	Examination halls accommodate more students than its carrying capacity		3.21	.83913	*
5.	Pressure to have a degree by all means		3.37	.86901	*

D = Decision, N = Total number* = Hold Grand Mean (GM) 3.16

The table 2 reveals that inability of lecturers to cover their course outline before examination ($X=3.10 > CM=2.5$), moving students from one hall to another during examination due to lack of classroom or halls ($X=2.93 > CM=2.5$), Inadequate preparation by students ($X=3.17 > CM=2.5$), examination halls accommodate more students than its carrying capacity ($X=3.21 > CM=2.5$) Pressure to have a degree by all means ($X=3.37 > CM=2.5$) predispose students to examination malpractices.

Nevertheless the Grand Mean (GM) of the Table 2 is 3.16 while the Criterion Mean (CM) is 2.5. This means that the predisposing factors influence the level of involvement in examination malpractice.

3.3 Research Question 3: What is the most common punishment for involvement in examination malpractice?

Table 3

Session	Punishment for involvement in examination malpractice
2011/2012	Rustication of one semester from the school
2012/2013	Rustication from one semester from the school.
2013/2014	One was Expelled from the school and others were rusticated from the school of one semester.

Source: IAUE Examination Malpractice Committee Report
Table 3 reveals that rustication for one semester was the most common punishment for involvement in examination malpractices. It also reveals that students can be expelled from school for involvement in examination malpractice.

3.4 Research Question 4: Between male and female students who are more involved in examination malpractice?

Session	No of treated cases of examination malpractice in Biology Department by sex				
	Males		Females		Total
2011/2012	0	0%	6	100%	
2012/2013	0	0%	3	100%	3
2013/2014	2	50%	2	50%	4

Source: IAUE Examination Malpractice Committee Report
Findings on table 4 indicate that more females are involved in examination malpractice than males.

4. Discussion

Forms of examination malpractice in biology department of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education: There are several forms of examination malpractice operational in higher institutions but from the result on table 1 above microchips (entering hall with very reduced form of the answers), writing on lining of gowns/skirts and paying of lecturers for scores show hundred percent (100%) agreement while writing on laps was 99% and giraffing (stretching neck to see another person's script) was 92%. Findings agree with [6] and [7] who listed all these forms of malpractice as predominant in our institutions of learning.

Factors predisposing biology student in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education to exam malpractice: Five items -

Inability of lecturers to cover their course outline before examination, Moving students from one hall to another during examination due to lack of classroom or halls, Inadequate preparation by students, Examination halls accommodate more students than its carrying capacity and Pressure to have a degree by all means— were listed for students to indicate their level of acceptance and all five surpassed the criterion mean of 2.5. This show that they were all predisposing factors which agrees with [18] who identified working conditions and societal pressure as predisposing factors for teachers and students involvement in malpractice respectively. The finding also agrees with [21] who sees lack of confidence as a result of inadequate preparation as the major predisposing factor to examination malpractice.

The most common punishment for involvement in examination malpractice meted on biology student in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education: Table 3 shows that the most common punishment for involvement in examination malpractice was rustication, which is quite humiliating yet over the years the higher institutions keep recording cases of examination malpractice. This finding is in line with what is obtainable in most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Unfortunately according to [17] almost all examination in Nigeria reflect cases of cheating.

Between male and female students who are more involved in examination malpractice in the department of biology: The result in table 4 show that female students are more involved in in examination than boys, which is also reflected on table 1 where item 8 talks about writing on lining of skirts and gowns. Girls wear skirts and gowns and only girls can easily open them to copy from what is written on their laps.

5. Conclusion

Since several factors predispose students and lecturers to examination malpractice and these students are punished yet more students are getting involved. It means that the predisposing factors are very strong to keep influencing these students to get involved in examination malpractices. There should be training on how to set questions that will make useless, microchips, write-upon laps and cloths. Basic amenities should be made available, adequate counselling programme should be organised to change their orientation especially at the point of entry into the university.

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