

A Survey of Some Possible Causes of Examination Malpractice among Students of Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated “causes of examination malpractice among students of Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa” by examining the extent of enforcement of penalties on examination offenders, moral development of students and students’ commitment to the practice of their religious. Two hundred (200) Nigeria Certificate Examination students of the college admitted in 2012/2013 academic session answered the 42 item questionnaires designed by the researcher. The collected data were analyzed using tables and mean. The findings of the study were that the penalties for examination offences are not duly enforced, the respondents had low morality and that they were not committed to the practice of their religion. Based on these findings, recommendations were put forward to include the following: College administrators should ensure that rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examinations in the college are enforced by setting up a special examinations’ monitoring body or task-force with people of worthy moral credentials as members. In addition, periodic moral education or training for lecturers who invigilate examinations, students who are the examinees and other stake-holders in the business of education in the college was recommend as well as the need for invigilators to be more vigilant to forestall plans to cheat, building of more examination halls to avoid overcrowding for effective and ease of invigilation were suggested as panaceas to examination malpractice that have become recalcitrant and seemingly intractable.*

Keywords: *Examination, Malpractice, Students, Enforcement of penalties, Moral development, Practice of religion*

Background of the study

Examination malpractice has become recalcitrant despite the rules and regulations guiding examinations as well as the spelt out penalties for examination offences in Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa and several other institutions of learning in Nigeria. This recurring situation of malpractices in examinations has become worrisome in view of some evils that are associated. For instance, it makes the certificates of many holders or graduates complete nonsense, it leads to misleading judgment as employers and school administrators as well as captains of industries base employment and admission decisions on examination results or certificates that may be faulty or distorted by malpractice. Even holders of these certificates are dressed in borrowed robes; they are impostors bearing or parading certificates, names or qualifications that are not truly theirs. In addition, examination malpractices compromise academic standards and as noted by Issa (2012), compromising standard is one sure way to mortgage, if not the present, certainly the future of a people.

In spite of these bedeviling effects of examination malpractice, examination results serve many purposes. It is the basis for categorizing and classifying students into Arts, Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Vocational and Technical Education, Architecture, and Agriculture as well as Medicine and Engineering. Indeed, examination is one of the instruments for assessing learning outcomes at virtually all the levels of educational institutions within the country. Results of examinations are used for admissions, promotions as well as for employment into government ministries as well as private institutions. The indispensability of examination as a tool in school learning cannot be overemphasized. This is why there are several attempts by stake-holders in

education in Nigeria to abate examination malpractice. But the more the attempts, the more elusive seems to be the solution.

Examination malpractice as a concept is variously defined to include all practices that frustrate the conduct of a free and fair examination that puts one candidate in an undue position of advantage over another candidate or examinee (Nuraini, 2008, and Aso Rock, 2007). According to Madaubum and Madaubum (1998), examination malpractice refers to any unacceptable conduct pertaining to examination that warrants the application of a variety of sanctions against the alleged or guilty offenders. It involves any form of illegal and unauthorized assistance that is given to a candidate or student in an examination (Nigerian Tribune, 2012)

In a more general term, malpractice in examinations according to Omonu and Alhassan (1998) involve any conduct, both of the officials responsible for education evaluation and the candidates being evaluated which gives undue and unauthorized advantage to a candidate with the intention of influencing the performance of such a candidate. Examination malpractice has three dimensional angles to it. It can take place before such an examination is written, during the writing of the examination and or after such an examination is written. This practice according to Nigerian Tribune (2012) can make the candidate involved to easily or cheaply attain success thereby putting the candidate sometimes ahead of his/her mates. Examination malpractice according Nuraini (2008) has consistently remained the bane of the Nigerian educational system. It is a cankerworm that portends danger for the nation (Tribune, 2012).

Examination malpractice is sustained because of the people that are involved and the varied styles and expertise with which they are carried out. Parents, teachers, students, school administrators and the certificate oriented-nature of our society are all seen as factors working collaboratively either directly or indirectly to sustain this ill-practice.

Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, is one of the tertiary institutions of learning owned by the government of Kogi state. This college was established in 1981 as a teacher training institution. In this college, there are rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examinations, behaviors that constitute examination offences and prescribed penalties for examination offenders that are included in handbooks that are distributed to all the students admitted into the college. In addition, these rules and regulations are extrapolated on examination cards that are issued to students some days to commencement of examinations. One will then assume that these students are sufficiently informed about the rules guiding examinations, punishments for offenders and that examination malpractice will be abated. But this assumption is not a truism? Examination malpractice is still being perpetrated in this college. What then could be the possible causes? Is it that the penalties are not adequately enforced? This aside, what is the level of moral development of these students because whether the penalties are enforced or not enforced, every individual with a well developed moral is supposed to keep off examination malpractice as well as individuals that are committed to practice of their religion. This is why this research attempted to find out about enforcement of penalties on examination offenders, the level of moral development of students and their commitments to practice of religion.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research was to find out why examination malpractice had continued in Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa, despite the spelt out rules and regulations as well as the prescribed penalties known to the students? Specifically, the study was intended to find out:

1. The extent of enforcement of penalties on examination offenders in KSCOE, Ankpa
2. The level of moral development of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, on a test of morality
3. The level of commitment of students to religious practice

Research Questions

Three questions were answered in this study thus;

1. What is the mean rating of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, on an instrument that measures enforcement of penalties on examination offenders?

2. What is the level of moral development of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, measured by their mean score on a test on morality?
3. To what extent does the mean score of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, show their commitment to practice of religion?

Methods

This study was a survey. It sought information on three variables that ensure that examinations could be written devoid of malpractice. These variables are: enforcement of penalties on examination offenders, healthy moral development of students and commitment to religious practice. Two hundred (200) Nigeria Certificate Examination (NCE) one students admitted into the college in 2012/2013 academic sessions were randomly sampled for the study. The instrument used to collect data was a forty five (45) item questionnaire designed by the researcher. This instrument was divided into three sections; A, B, And C. Section A, fielded seventeen (17) items on penalties for examination offenses. It was a two-response mode as the respondents were required to tick “This is usually enforced” or “This is not usually enforced” and a mean of 1.5 and above was accepted as positive for any of the corresponding items.

In section B, twenty (20) questions on morality were asked with a five –response options and a mean of 2.5 and above accepted as positive. Similarly, section C, fielded eight (8) questions on the practice of religion of respondents with a five-response options of “Strongly Agreed”, “Agreed”, “Disagreed”, “Strongly Disagreed” and “Uncertain” and a mean of 2.5 and above as positive. Analyses of the data collected were done with the use of tables and means.

Results and discussions

The results of the study are presented and discussed according to the research questions that were asked thus:

Question 1

What is the mean rating of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, on an instrument that measures enforcement of penalties on examination offenders?

The answer to this question is presented on table 1.

Table 1. *Students’ responses on enforcement of rules on examination offences in KSCOE, Ankpa*

S/N	Examination offences	Mean score
1	Bringing into an examination any unauthorized examination materials bring expulsion from the college if caught	1.5
2	Using a pre-prepared material in an examination bring expulsion from the college as penalty	1.4
3	Leaving the examination hall with used answer booklets bring expulsion from the college as penalty	1.4
4	Impersonation (taking examination for another candidate) is an offence that bring expulsion from the college	1.5
5	A candidate caught exchanging answer materials will be expelled from the college	1.5
6	A candidate caught physically assaulting an invigilator will be expelled from the college	1.4
7	A candidate caught with a pre-prepared material whether is not used will be expelled from the college	1.4
8	A student caught with harmful/dangerous materials in the examination hall will be expelled from the college	1.4
9	A candidate caught chewing any suspected material or hiding same will be expelled from the college	1.4
10	A candidate caught in any examination fraud after signing two undertakings to be of good behavior will be expelled from the college	1.4
11	A candidate caught in any examination fraud after signing two undertakings to be of good behavior will be expelled from the college	1.4
12	A candidate that is disobedient to the invigilator and found guilty will be made to repeat that course	1.4

13	A candidate caught leaving the examination hall with an unused answer booklet will be made to repeat that course	1.3
14	If a candidate comes late to an examination for more than 30 minutes that candidate is to repeat the course	1.2
15	A candidate caught giraffing (peeping into another person's work) is to sign an undertaking to be of good behavior	1.3
16	A candidate will be made to sign an undertaking of good behavior for talking with another candidate without the invigilator's permission	1.3
17	A candidate will be made to sign an undertaking of good behavior for writing points on his/her question paper	1.4
Total mean		24.9
Grand Mean		1.4

Survey, Q1-17, N=200

It is never in doubt that the behaviors identified on Table 1 constitute examination offences. But what is however obvious in this college and as pointed out by the students is that the rules are seldom enforced. Only three items, 1, 4 and 5 were accepted to be enforced. In fact, item number 5 which is impersonation is taking to be a very serious offence that if caught the culprit will be expelled. The enforcement of item 1, that is, bringing into an examination any unauthorized examination material will only bring expulsion depending on the invigilator that caught the student. On several occasions students were seen copying from pre-prepared materials and no such disciplinary measures were enforced. What most invigilators do is to either collect the material from the student and destroy with stern warning or collect the students answer booklet and issue a fresh one.

In fact, using or not using a pre- prepared material in examination, leaving the examination hall with used answer booklets, exchanging answer materials as well as physically assaulting invigilators are common offences in this college that are not punished as severely as the handbook prescribes. This is likely to be the major reason why this act is perpetuated. Students who are found guilty are not so seriously punished to serve as deterrent to others. Many invigilators manage and cover up these offences giving the students reasons to continue.

Question 2

What is the level of moral development of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, measured by their mean score on a test on morality?

The answered to this question is shown on table 2

Table 2. Mean responses of students to moral issues in examination in KSCOE, Ankpa

S/N	Moral issues about exam malpractice	Responses					TR	- X
		SA (5)	A (4)	D (3)	SD (2)	U (1)		
18	Examination malpractice is widespread	89	38	22	24	27	738	3.69
19	Cheating on exams is necessary in order to get a good grade	33	27	48	63	29	572	2.86
20	I am very knowledgeable about the rules governing exams	76	64	15	11	34	737	3.69
21	I must admit, I have frequently violated the rules set to govern examinations	36	40	33	38	58	569	2.85
22	I have never cheated on exams	74	41	34	20	31	707	3.54
23	It is not bad for a candidate to be reminded of a point he/she forgets in an examination	40	46	40	36	38	614	3.07
24	If a candidate is sick, he/she can plead with a friend who is a course-mate to write and submit an assignment or test for him/her	40	46	47	35	32	627	3.14
25	It is better to ask a lecturer for marks after the examination than cheating to pass in that examination	38	54	29	37	42	609	3.05
26	Because of how tightly we sit together in an examination, I cannot tell another candidate not to copy my work even if I know that he/she is doing	46	44	49	30	31	644	3.22

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27	It is not bad for a lecturer to help students who are weak in passing his/her course	31	41	45	52	31	589	2.95
28	Students who cheat in an examination are not to blame especially when questions in such examinations are very difficult	31	33	61	40	35	585	2.93
29	I don't think that cheating in an examination is a serious sin that offends God	32	29	38	70	31	561	2.81
30	I don't think that examination malpractice is sinful because it is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible or Quran	30	25	48	68	29	559	2.80
31	I will not feel guilty cheating in an examination	40	19	52	60	29	581	2.91
32	If I carried over a course for two times, on my third attempt, if I have opportunity, I will cheat to pass it	31	34	55	49	31	585	2.93
33	I will rather cheat to pass than being told to leave the school without a certificate	31	41	53	47	28	600	3.00
34	People who cheat in an examination are not morally healthy	30	47	41	45	37	588	2.94
35	I think cheating in an examination should not warrant expulsion from the college as a penalty	29	39	45	48	39	571	2.86
36	Hardly are there students in higher institutions now that do not cheat to pass examination	46	37	49	40	28	633	3.17
37	I obviously used to thank God whenever we are given an invigilator that is not also very strict about some misconducts during examination	43	38	44	38	37	612	3.06
Grand Mean:3.07								

TR= Total Weighted Responses, X= Mean

Source: Survey, Q18-37, N=200

Looking at the grand mean of 3.07 and using it to say that the students have good moral development may be wrong because there are some statements or expressions that are negative and positive. Item 18 showed a mean of 3.69 that is above the acceptable mean of 3.0. What this means is that the respondents accepted that examination malpractice is wide spread. They students also claimed to be very knowledgeable about the rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examination as shown by the mean score of 3.69 on table 2. This means that examination malpractice is not perpetuated because the candidates are ignorant about the rules and regulations guiding its conduct but that is a deliberate act occasioned by other factors, one of which may be the problem of moral development. In fact, there are virtually no public institutions of learning in Nigeria that examination misconduct is not practiced if not overtly but covertly despite the published and unpublished codes of conduct for examinations by these institutions.

According to item number 21 on table 2, the students did not admit that they had frequently violated the rules set to govern examinations (mean= 2.89). But there are other responses that show that they violated these rules indirectly. For example, some responses showed that it is not bad for a candidate to be reminded of a point he/she forgets in an examination (mean= 3.07) and that if a candidate is sick it is not bad to arrange with his/her course mate to write and submit either an assignment or write a test for him or her in proxy (mean= 3.14). The respondents equally admitted that it is better to ask a course lecturer for marks after the candidate had sat for the examination than cheating to pass the said course. What these responses indicate is that examination malpractice is a moral problem. If not, why would a student with a well-defined morality ask another student to write and submit tests/assignments on his/her behalf (impersonation) and as well prefer to canvas for marks from lecturers instead of cheating. A further proof that these students have moral problem is their belief that there are hardly students in higher institutions of learning now that do not cheat to pass examination (mean=3.17) and that they are happy whenever they are provided with an invigilator that is not very strict about some misconducts during examinations (mean= 3.06). It is still these same students that have rejected that cheating on exams is necessary to get a good grade (2.86), it is bad for a lecturer to help weak students with scores to pass his course (2.95) and that students should not be praised for cheating

because examination questions are difficult (2.93). The students rejected the statement that cheating in examination is not a serious sin that could offend God (2.80) that they will not feel guilty if they cheat in examination (2.91). All these go to prove that these students see examination malpractice as serious evil but practice it directly or indirectly. On item 22, the students accepted that they had not cheated in examination (mean = 3.54). But their positive responses to other items that is not bad for a candidate to be reminded of a point he/she forgets in an examination, and that tests and examinations could be contracted in case of some incidentals like sickness, travels etc, is indicative of the fact that these students reacted to this item 22 positively perhaps, because the question was very direct and personal.

Question 3

To what extent does the mean score of students of KSCOE, Ankpa, show their commitment to practice of religion?

The answer to this question is shown on table 3

Table 3. Findings about the practice of religion of respondents

S/N	Item	Responses					TR	N	- X
		S/A (5)	A (4)	D (3)	S/D (2)	U (1)			
38	I consider myself a very religious person	80	80	20	10	10	810	200	4.05
39	In the past week I have spent time in prayer and worship in private	20	30	60	40	50	530	200	2.65
40	In the past week I have actively participated in a worship service	20	50	60	50	20	600	200	3.00
41	I discuss about my religion with other persons	10	40	60	50	40	530	200	2.65
42	I often meditate on God's word despite my tight schedules	20	50	60	20	50	570	200	2.85
43	I am sure I will spend my eternity with God when I die	40	48	-	-	112	504	200	2.52
44	I know there are small sins God will treat lightly	60	40	30	10	80	450	200	2.25
45	I know that anybody that does good will see God when he/she dies	60	60	30	10	40	690	200	3.45

Source: Survey, Q38-45, N=200

Table 3 reveals that the respondents accepted that they are religious persons with mean score of 4.05 that is above the acceptable mean of 3.00. In addition, the respondents admitted that they participated actively in a worship service. It is not surprising, because every person that has any object of worship when asked will actually claim that he or she is religious. But the other questions that tested their actual commitments like spending time in private prayer and worship, always meditating on the word of God, and discussing their religion with other persons, showed negative results. The respondents were also not sure of spending eternity with God when they die.

The respondents actually belong to different religious organizations namely, the Roman Catholic, the Pentecostals, and also the Muslims. The Muslims for instance and several other people that go to church have no assurance of salvation. When they are asked if they will go to heaven when they die, several will respond that until they get there. Many people go to church in Nigeria, but not many of them practice the tenets of their Christian faith. So also are the adherents of Islamic religion in Nigeria. Every individual that has no commitment to his/her religion can perpetuate any form of evil.

Conclusion

In Kogi State College of Education (KSCOE), Ankpa, efforts are made by the college management to prevent examination malpractice by making rules and regulations that guide examinations available to students in a handbook as well as students' examination cards. Included in this handbook as well as the examination cards are behaviors that constitute examination malpractice in the college and penalties for examination offences. These efforts notwithstanding,

examination malpractice still exists in this college. Why this had continued according the findings of this study is because the penalties are not duly enforced, students have low morality and they are not commitment to the practice of their religion. Where these three variables exist, examination malpractice cannot but continued. Recommendations were therefore, put forward in this direction.

Recommendations

1. It is not just enough to make rules and regulations. If rules and regulations are made, the college administrators must ensure that they are enforced by setting up a special examination monitoring body/task-force to be saddled with the responsibility of monitoring the conduct of examinations both overtly and covertly. Membership of this special committee should be people with high moral and ethical credentials, people who have been tested and trusted such that their judgments or decisions will not be in any way questionable. Such people are known by students and even their colleagues that if saddled with this type of responsibility, the college community will know that it were done in good faith and not for the purpose of victimizing or witch-hunting anybody.
2. Moral and religious education or training is recommended periodically for the students and other stake holders in the business of examinations in the college. A lecturer who trades marks for material benefits, ignore sharp practices of students in the examination hall is morally bankrupt. Similarly, a student that takes advantage of poor invigilation to commit examination fraud is equally guilty of immoral act. It is possible for examinees no matter the greatness of their numbers to write examinations without an invigilator and will not cheat if they are morally upright. Therefore, periodic moral education is advocated.
3. Frequent seminars should be organized for lecturers who are directly involved with examination supervision, marking and grading of students. The content of what this seminar should include are, things that make up effective invigilation, code of conducts of an invigilator, the evil and penalties of aiding and abetting examination fraud, consequences of leaking examination questions, trading examination scores for money or any other prizes, among others. If lecturers are frequently reminded of these rules and their penalties for offenders and the first violator is not spared the rod of discipline, they are likely to take invigilation more seriously than what obtains currently in this college.
4. Programs that will have to enhance the religious commitment of students should be put in place regularly by leaders of various religious groups on the campus. This will help a great deal to improve the conscience of students as well as humanizing them especially as no religion encourages evil.
5. The college administrators should shore up efforts to build more examination halls large enough to accommodate examinees to overcome the crowded nature of examinations halls that obtain currently. This can become feasible by appealing to Tertiary Education Tax Fund (TETFund), a body established by law to fund and equip tertiary institutions of learning in the country with infrastructural facilities. In addition, funds for this project could equally be sourced from successful alumni of the college as well as those generated through internal revenues by the college.
6. Examination invigilators are to be more vigilant not to even give examinees slightest opportunity to birth examination fraud even if they are conceived with such ideas. It is not a healthy practice for an invigilator to leave the hall and go to stay outside discussing with people, or remaining in the hall but busy reading or engaging in other things that will sidetrack his/her attention. When an invigilator is seen to be serious, examinees will withdraw from hatching nursed intention to cheat.
7. It is recommended that further research into how to develop the morals of teachers, national leaders, religious leaders and parents should be embarked upon especially as these significant others play a lot of roles directly and or indirectly in the lives of our youths. Our youths (students) are watching us, they are learning from us. We don't expect them to be anything different if we are not. The mess that is currently being paraded by parents who are the political leaders, spiritual leaders, teachers and traditional chiefs call for a re-think if not we are indirectly breeding animals in human skins.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



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