

MATHEMATICS EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE IN SCHOOLS: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

Mr. N. D. Oye and Dr. M. R. Odekunle

Abstract

The setting and marking of examinations have great effect on the students of mathematics. According to Fransson (1977), the type of questions given in mathematics examination can induce approach to studying and that the factual over - burdening of syllabuses and examinations may be responsible for the low level of understanding exhibited by students in mathematics when prevented from reproducing answer by way of rehearsed methods.

This paper focused on examination malpractices. Three research questions were deliberated upon.

- (i) What is the nature of the examination malpractices?
- (ii) What are the causes of examination malpractices?
- (in) What are the strategies that could be employed to minimize examination malpractices?

The method employed was the survey method. Questionnaires were distributed to 120 students and 40 lecturers of Adamawa State Polytechnic. Based on the data collected and analyzed, it was discovered that supervisors and lecturers do not help students in any way or form to cheat in examination.

Introduction

Every year in Nigeria, examination is characterized by a number of cases of cheating by candidates. Cheating such as leakage of questions several weeks or months before the examination are held and obtaining illegal or unauthorized help during the examinations are common phenomenon in most examinations. The reason for this could be attributed to the emphasis placed on paper qualification. Obicha (1979, p. 194) opined that:

The typical West African is over conscious of examinations and tends to believe implicitly in the certificates and paper qualifications so necessary for admission into higher institutions of learning, employment or promotion.

It is therefore not surprising to find leakages and forgeries in examinations. Other examination malpractices include candidates copying answers already written by others. Some students bring into the examination halls previously written answers or crib notes..

The setting and marking of examinations have great effect on the students of Mathematics. According to Fransson (1977), the type of questions given in Mathematics examination can induce approach to studying and that the factual overburdening of syllabuses and examinations may be responsible for the low level of understanding exhibited by students in mathematics especially when prevented from reproducing answer by well rehearsed methods. This is why Noel (1974) argued that for maximum validity to be attained in mathematics examination all relevant questions must be asked. He further argued that for maximum validity, each of the four conditions must be administered. These include marking-consistency, marking-relevance, question-consistency and balance.

In practice however, the condition of marking-relevance and consistency are the most serious ones. This is a common case with Nigerian examination markers, who do not use any marking scheme even when it is provided. Examinations which are not properly administered may fail to function effectively for the purpose they are administered. This is common with untrained teachers who do not know how to administer mathematics examinations.

Lingren (1980) was of this thought when he complained that some teachers apparently feel that they were evaluating when they gave examination to students and record the scores without interpreting them to see their relevance to set goals.

Over the years, Mathematics results of SSCE and NECO are very poor. Consequently, Nigerians were

greatly disappointed in the current trend of mathematics education. They contend that the standard has fallen tremendously. According to parents, even the performance of the internally set and conducted examinations in mathematics have been most discouraging and hence disappointing.

Some of the secondary schools in the country do not even get examination results from WAEC in mathematics due to leakages and examination malpractices. The standard of education in our institutions has fallen and one of the major factors is the examination malpractice. The government and school administrators have tried by promulgating decrees and awarding serious punishment for the act but yet, the impact is hardly felt by the people concerned. It is the aim of this research work to find out some of the strategies that will minimize examination malpractice or reduce the rate at which student perfect cheating in schools.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of examination malpractices?
2. What are the causes of examination malpractices?
3. What are the strategies that could be employed to minimize examination malpractices?

Literature Review

Examination malpractice in Nigeria at a significant level could be said to have started in the late 60s. Since then, examination malpractice continues to get a solid ground despite all the decrees and punishments attached to the crime. The government through the education ministry and other organs such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), The Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC), have mounted some programmes to educate the students against the notorious activity of cultism that encourage students to threaten lecturers into passing them in examinations and motivating students to indulge themselves in examination malpractice. These programmes include student orientation programme design at the beginning of semester to enlighten students especially the new ones to the school about the regulations governing the school, regulations on examinations, regulations on examination malpractice and its associated penalties.

Examination malpractices have led to the production of unqualified candidates in the society who on getting back to work in the academic sector help in bringing academic standard to the lowest levels. Nnaemeka (1998, p. 5) further stated that:

Examination malpractice is a bane to the economic advancement of this great nation and that is why despite 37 years of independence in this country, we are still up to nothing and still answer third world country.

This statement may be true because of the frequent news mostly on international media about corruption, '419', Smuggling and Nigeria is considered as one of those countries that carry out such activities.

The Government has laid down good policies on education, so that there will be an effective and qualitative education, so that the students can then transfer what they learnt into reality in order to bring development to the country. However, the policy suffered a great set-back because according to Gyallesu(1996,p. 55),

Although it (the policy) was well designed and articulated towards uplifting the standard of education, yet most of its agents shouldered with the responsibilities of implementation never allowed such policies to see the light of the day. Funds are mismanaged, educational materials vanish in the air and therefore standards continue to deteriorate at an alarming rate,

Obviously, it is a well-known fact that lack of learning facilities affects students' performance. This did not only affect their performance but also serve as motivating factors for them to indulge in Examination malpractice and other forms of academic cheating.

According to Abdulkadir (2000, p. 8), "If you go to any town or village, any dilapidated building you see, you don't have to be told that it is a school. The teachers are not in the most comfortable situation just as there is a paucity of teaching facilities, aid and equipment for the learner". Nnaemeka (1998, p.5), stated that, "much emphasis has been laid on certificates in this country. Nigerians don't" mind that there could be other means to

test the worth of their abilities hence their good unmerited certificate suffice for them". Due to the truth of this statement above, most students indulge in examination malpractice so that they can acquire this paper qualification by hook or by crook in order to fit into the society. Abdulmajeed (1999) opined that, some parents worsen the situation by not paying their children's school fees on time or not providing them with all the necessary learning materials on time, thereby, forcing their children to stay out of school for many days in a term, which resulted in these children missing a good part of the school session.

Unless some concrete measures are taken to stop this act, in a very few years to come, our society will be filled with unqualified professionals.

Methodology

The method employed for the research design was survey method. Questionnaires (Causes of Examination Malpractice in Adamawa State Polytechnic) were distributed to 120 students and 40 lecturers of Adamawa State Polytechnic to sought relevant information from them regarding strategies for minimizing examination malpractice. All these were later collected back for analysis.

Procedure for Data Analysis

Mean statistic was used in analyzing the data collected in this study. The data collected was organized in Tables 1, 2 and 3. The result was interpreted in numerical form that was used in the analysis of all the data gathered. A five point likert scale was used with nominal values from five points to one point. A mean score of 3.0 was adopted as the cut-off point. The interval width of 0.5 was applied so that upper limit value is 3.50. Any item with a mean of 3.50 and above was considered as "agreed" whereas mean score of 3.49 and below was regarded as "disagreed".

Table 1: The Nature of Examination Malpractice in Adamawa State Polytechnic

S/No	Item	Students N = 120		Teachers N - 40		Average Mean		Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Supervisors help students during examinations	2.30	1.50	2.10	1.15	1.90	1.33	Disagree
2.	Students enter the examination hall with papers	3.40	1.61	3.90	0.34	3.65	1.23	Agree
3.	Student get access to question paper before examination without the knowledge of lecturers	2.60	1.29	2.30	0.91	2.45	1.10	Disagree
4.	Students compel others to cheat during examination	3.10	1.29	2.40	1.37	2.75	1.33	Disagree
5.	Lecturers help with real question papers before the examination	2.50	1.26	2.50	0.67	2.50	0.97	Disagree
6.	Students copy from their colleagues during examination	3.70	1.13	4.40	0.49	4.05	0.81	Agree
7.	Students follow up examination papers after examination	3.80	1.05	3.50	1.30	3.40	1.18	Disagree

From Table 1, respondent agreed with only item 2 and 6, while they disagreed with the remaining items. This is because item 2 and 6 have their mean above 3.50.

Table 2: Causes of Examination Malpractice in Adamawa State Polytechnic

PS/No	Item	Students N = 120		Teachers N = 40		Average Mean		Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SO	
1.	Lack of enough facilities	3.50	1.37	3.20	0.99	3.35	1.18	Disagree
2.	Frequent closing of school causes students to cheat in examination	3.70	1.18	3.10	1.39	3.40	1.29	Disagree
3.	Parental expectation causes students to themselves in examination malpractice	3.50	1.29	4.00	1.57	3.75	1.43	Agree
4.	Students cheat examination to get grade	4.50	0.73	4.40	0.49	4.45	0.61	Agree

5.	Laziness on the part of the students make them cheat in examination	4.30	0.72	4.50	0.51	4.40	0.62	Agree
6.	Lack of enough exposure in area of studies students to cheat examination	3.60	1.12	2.30	1.44	2.95	1.28	Disagree
7.	Students are not properly punished for malpractice	3.10	1.59	2.90	1.66	3.00	1.63	Disagree

From Table 2, the respondents agreed with items 3,4 and 5. This is because their average mean is from 3.50 and above. The respondent disagreed with the-other items because their average mean is below 3.50.

Table 3: Strategies for Minimizing Examination Malpractice in Adamawa State Polytechnic

S/No	Item	Students N = 120		Teachers N = 40		Average Mean		Decision
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1.	Proper orientation can reduce cheating during examinations	4.20	0.60	3.30	1.36	3.75	0.98	Agree
2.	School rules and regulations if properly followed can cheating during exams	4.40	0.67	4.30	0.91	4.35	0.79	Agree
3.	Students expulsion solve the problem examination malpractice	3.40	1.11	3.30	1.02	3.35	1.07	Disagree
4.	Proper supervision during examinations can minimize examination malpractice	4.40	0.49	4.50	0.51	4.45	0.50	Agree
5.	Cases of malpractice should reported frequently to the appropriate authority	3.90	0.91	4.10	1.18	4.00	1.05	Agree

6.	Government policies education can help students to reduce cheating during examination	3.50	1.12	3.00	1.57	3.25	1.35	Disagree
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From Table 3, the respondents agreed with items 1,2,4 and 5. This is because their mean is above 3.50. They disagreed with 3 and 6 because their average mean is below 3.5.

Findings

Based on the result of the data analyzed, the following are some of the strategies for minimizing examination malpractice in Adamawa State Polytechnic:

1. Both lecturers and students should report any case about examination malpractice appropriately to the authority concerned.
2. Although expulsion cannot solve the problem of examination malpractice, the respondents strongly agreed that students should be properly punished for cheating in examination.
3. Proper supervision must also be observed during examination.
4. Students should be properly oriented on examination malpractice and other school rules and regulations.
5. Students cheat to get higher grade in most cases because of parental/sponsors expectation. But laziness on the side of students also contributed greatly towards examination malpractice.

Recommendations

It is recommended that appropriate punishment should be given to any student caught cheating during examination. Also parents/sponsors should be properly enlightened through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and through the media that they should not compel their children to get higher grades. Parents should only motivate their children to read hard.

Lecturers and students should report any case of examination malpractice or any cases related to examination malpractice to the appropriate authority.

Since students are fond of entering examination halls with papers while others students copy from classmates, the research recommended that proper and strict supervision should be observed. Students should be properly checked and monitored before entering the hall and during the examinations.

Finally, all examination bodies such as WAEC, NECO, NTI, NABTEB, JAMB and all institutions of higher learning should also intensify their effort to stamp out cheating in all educational examinations.

Conclusion

Based on the data collected and analyzed in this study, it was discovered that supervisors and lecturers don't help students in any way or form to cheat in examination. Furthermore, government policy on education, strong punishment, frequent closure of school and lack of enough facilities are not strongly agreed as factors that could facilitate examination malpractice.

The research finally concluded that the following are responsible for examination malpractice in Adamawa State Polytechnic: Lack of proper orientation, lack of following rules and regulations, students are very lazy during the course of their study, Parental or sponsors expectation make students to cheat, lack of reporting examination malpractice cases to the appropriate authority promptly and lack of proper supervision-or negligence by the supervisors or invigilators before and during examination.

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