

Problems of Examination Malfeasance in Nigerian Universities: Emergent Issues and Management Options

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KEYWORDS Emergent. Causes. Lecturers. Students. Malfeasance.

ABSTRACT This study was motivated by the need to redress the growing problem of examination malfeasance 3000 subjects up of 1,000 lecturers and 2,000 students were used for the study. Data were collected through a two-part questionnaire made up of 20 items. Two research questions were raised and answered using mean and two hypotheses were formulated and tested using z statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Identified emergent causes include students over population, irregular lecture attendance by students, inadequate facilities for teaching and learning. Provision of adequate teaching and learning facilities and admission of high quality students were identified possible solutions to the problems of continuous existence of examination malfeasance. There is no significant difference between the views of lecturers and students on the identified emergent causes and possible solutions to the problems of continuous existence of examination malfeasance in Nigeria universities.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the universities in Nigeria have been facing a number of problems/crises. These are largely manifested in inadequacies in the supply of basic instructional materials, facilities/infrastructure, and students' over-population, accommodation for staff and students, cultism, examination malfeasance among others (Apple 1990; Azu 1999; Enole 2001). Currently, the most disturbing of all these problems is examination malfeasance which has posed a new challenge in the administration of examinations. This problem needs to be successfully tackled by the universities if they are to be rightly positioned to train the requisite high level manpower for the nation's development and add to the existing body of knowledge (Egbule 2003).

Examination malfeasance has been defined as "any behaviour or action that violates the laid down rules and regulations for the proper conduct of examination" (Ezeh and Abanobi 2004). Onoja (2004) quoting Ministry of Education, Benue State of Nigeria defines examination malfeasance as "examination fraud, corruption or cheating". He adds that when the conduct of examination is not free and fair, examination malfeasance is said to have taken place in institutions of learning.

For the purpose of this study, examination malfeasance should be understood to mean any form of unethical and illegal practice that is

employed to achieve cheap success and has been described by Oparta (2003) as 'the new age suicide' arguing that it leads to the ruination of one's life. There is no doubt that examination malfeasance is among the chief and intractable social problems that has bedevilled Nigeria especially at the first two levels of education (Primary and Secondary schools levels). The Nigerian public became aware of this problem in 1977 when mass leakage of examination questions was unfolded during the May/June West African School Certificate Examination (Akpotu 1998). The examination was cancelled and strict measures were taken by government and the examination body to stop the act. Their efforts were to a large extent rewarded as the exposition of question papers for the next couple of years was successfully checked. But the measures did not bring examination malfeasance at this level of education to an end. It has generally become the order of the day. No wonder then the malfeasance in examination has filtered into the university system as the products of secondary education transit to the universities thereby carrying along with them, the culture of examination malfeasance.

The forms of examination malfeasance in the university system are not much different from those at the secondary school level. According to Oruma (1985), Okoye (1986) Oleksy-Ojukwu (1987), Ejuogu and Odebunmi (1994), the forms include spying on one's neighbour's work, bringing into examination hall prepared answers, verbal

exchanges of ideas due to proximity of test mates and over crowdedness of examinees. Others are examinees having fore-knowledge of the questions before the actual examination time (leakage), awarding inflated marks to students who are friends to the lecturers, lecturers soliciting and wooing colleagues to award unmerited grades to their student friends. In addition, parents sometimes put pressure on lecturers to award pass marks to their children and wards; students are not left out in this act because some of them go as far as offering money to lecturers to earn pass mark. In most of the bad cases, the grades awarded could be determined by the amount such parent/student is able to offer. Finally, issuance of threats to examiners/lecturers by students for pass marks and higher grades, impersonation and result/certificate forgery.

It is difficult to exhaust the various ways examination ethics are violated in the university system in Nigeria. The forms highlighted above do not need much explanation for one to understand them. Moreover, they are not strange to any Nigerian who cares to hear and observe what happens around him. Some university students are frequently caught with materials with the intention to copy answers from them. People write examination for others (impersonation) and examination questions leak. Sometimes, students forge results to deceive their parents or guardians, and frequently, they are caught and punished. The punishment is determined by the gravity of the cheating. It is on record that university students and students of other tertiary institutions have been severely punished as a result of examination malfeasance. Quoting Akpotu (1998) "in November 1994, the Ogun State Polytechnic, Abeokuta suspended 8 students and dismissed 4 others for alleged examination dishonesty. In March 1994, the Ahamdu Bello-University (ABU) authority dismissed 19 students for alleged examination malfeasance". This has been the trend in many other tertiary institutions. The most recent of them is the case of 230 students of Delta State University who were withdrawn from the University for Gaining Admission with irregular entry credentials via forged results, alteration of grades, imposition of names and imposition of examination centres. (Delta State University Official Bulletin 2006).

Despite these and other measures that have been taken by tertiary institutions, especially the Nigerian universities to check malfeasance in

examinations, it does not appear to reduce, instead, the incidences are on the increase. Some scholars have identified some reasons why examination malfeasance has continued to flourish. Ojoja (2004) blames it on students' laziness, unpreparedness for examination and undue emphasises on certificate in the country instead of sufficient knowledge and skills while Azu (1999) and Enole (2001) blame it on evolving negative societal values, youths' lack of interest in schooling in preference for the pursuance of money-yielding ventures. In his contribution, Ezech (2002) believes that the problems associated with examinations are heightened because of parents' neglect of their responsibility of bringing up their children morally, poor funding of education and poor state of facilities, high cost of education as well as poverty in the society and increasing corruption in Nigeria. Arising from the foregoing, it is obvious that a number of scholars have been searching for an answer/solution to this problem but none of these research findings has been ascertain to have completely eliminated malfeasance in examination. Some of these studies included Akinpelu (1983) and Oghuvbu (2006) who suggested the creation of an environment of moral integrity, mutual trust, and promotion of team work among lecturers. The enforcement of decree 21 of 1984 which recommended decisive punishment for those found guilty of examination malfeasance (Akpotu 1998). Ezech (2005) in his contribution recommended adequate facilities, improved funding and reduced poverty level of Nigerians etc. The question one is moved to ask here is 'what has gone wrong?' Could there be new challenges in the administration of examination that have encouraged the up rising of malfeasance in university examinations in Nigeria?

To adequately address the above questions, the following research questions are raised.

1. What are the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities?
2. What are the possible measures to address the emergent causes of examination malfeasance?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between lecturers and students on the identified emergent causes of examination malfeasance.
2. There is no significant difference between

lecturers and students on identified possible measures to address the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in universities in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out the views of lecturers and students on the emergent causes of the continuous existences of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities. It was also billed to find out if the views of lecturers are significantly different from those of the students and finally to identify measures that can possibly redress the situation.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This study employed a survey method. It used a random sample of 1000 lecturers and 2000 students drawn proportionately from the North-West, North Central, South East and South – South political zones of Nigeria.

Instrument and Data Collection

Emergent Causes of Examination Malfeasance Questionnaire (ECEMQ) used for this study was designed by the researchers with the aids of more senior colleagues in educational administration. ECEMQ is a four point likert scale questionnaire with two parts with 20 items. Part one on emergent causes of examination malfeasance 13 items and part two, possible solutions to the causes/problems of examination malfeasance. 7 items.

The instrument was validated and tested for reliability and have a co-efficient of 0.68 using Product Moment Correlation Coefficient 'r' from split –half method.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire was based on four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The four-point scale questionnaire was weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Accordingly the mean scores of the weighted responses were calculated. For the purpose of decision making, the mid value of the scale (2.5) was taken as the cut-off point, obtained by adding the exact upper limit (4.5) to the exact lower limit (0.5) of the scale and dividing by two. Thus, any mean score of 2.5 and above was considered significant with respect to research questions 1 and 2

RESULTS

Results presented in table 1, 2, 3 and 4 are the results of study according to research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What are the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities?

The results presented in table 1 shows the views of lecturers and students on the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigeria Universities. From the analysis of the data in table 1, all 13 items meant to provide the answer to this segment were accepted by the lecturers in their

Table 1: Mean rating of the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities.

S.No.	Items	Lecturers' X Score	Students' X Score	Over all mean
1	Inadequate facilities for teaching.	3.56 +	3.60 +	3.59
2	Laziness on the part of students to study.	3.72 +	2.42 -	2.85
3	Laziness on the part of lecturers to teach.	3.30 +	3.88 +	3.69
4	Lack of adequate lecture halls.	3.51 +	3.55 +	3.53
5	Students over population-over crowded examination halls.	3.61 +	3.59 +	3.60
6	High cost of Education.	3.10 +	3.17 +	3.14
7	Admission of low quality students.	3.84+	3.75 +	3.80
8	Poor training of University teachers.	3.46 +	3.51 +	3.49
9	Inadequate number of examination invigilators.	3.64 +	3.44 +	3.54
10	Non-chalant attitude of some invigilators towards students conduct.	3.68 +	3.76 ±	3.72
11	Irregular lecture attendance by students.	3.86 +	3.70+	3.78
12	Administrative error by H.O.D./Lecturers	3.93 +	3.46 +	3.70
13	General lack of academic culture.	2.71 ±	2.62 +	2.67
	Grand mean (X)	2.97	2.85	2.91

+ Agree, - Disagree

views as the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities with a grand mean of 3.61. They were of the view that examination malfeasance is currently caused by admission of low quality students and irregular lecture attendance by students in particular while others are over-crowded examination halls resulting from students over-population, non-chalant attitude of some examination invigilators, laziness on the part of students to study and inadequate number of examination invigilators as well as administrative error by Heads of Department (H. O.D.) and lecturers. Yet other identified causes included inadequate facilities for teaching, lack of adequate lecture halls and poor training of university teachers. Not left out were laziness on the part of some lecturers to teach, high cost of education and finally, general lack of academic culture.

The students on their part appeared to agree with the lecturers with a ground mean of 2.85 on the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Universities in Nigeria as they equally identified all but item 2 of the 13 items which suggested students laziness. Perhaps the students deliberately voted less for item 2 because it would have amounted to self indictment. To an extent, the study of Ezech (2000) is in agreement with some aspect of the causes which identified poor state of facilities and high cost of education. The other factors may not have been identified by Ezech because his study was limited to the lower levels of Education.

Research Question 2: What are the possible measures to address the emergent causes of examination malfeasance?

Table 2 shows that both the lecturers and the students agree with the 7 suggested measures to address the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities but one on

the part of the students. The students did not quite agree with item 7 (enforcement of law against examination malfeasance). Specifically the lecturers and the students had a grand mean of suggested measures score of 3.77 and 3.31 respectively. The above finding agrees with Ezech (2005) who recommended the provision of adequate teaching and learning facilities and improved funding for the educational system in Nigeria as well as Akpotu (1998) who emphasized the need for the enforcement of decree 21 of 1984 which recommended decisive punishment of jail term for offenders.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between lecturers and students on the identified emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigeria universities.

The result of the data analysis presented in table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between lecturers and students views on the emergent causes of examination malfeasance. With mean scores of 2.97 and 2.85 for the lecturers and students respectively show that they have similar views and have been found to be statistically not significantly different with a calculated Z value of 0.93 and a critical value of 1.96. The foregoing result reveals that there is no significant difference in the values and views of Nigerian University lecturers and students. They agree that there are emergent causes and also agree on the individual causes so identified except that the response to the issue of laziness on the part of the students which had a difference in mean scores of lecturers and students. However, this difference in mean did not significantly affect the overall mean scores of the two groups which was the basis for the comparison made. Furthermore, the students low mean score could have been due to the fact that many students by their nature would not easily give in to self

Table 2: Z-test analysis of difference in views of lecturers and students on the emergent causes of examination malfeasance.

S. No.	Items	Lecturers' X Score	Students' X Score	Over all mean
1	Provision of adequate teaching & learning facilities.	3.98 +	3.96 +	3.97
2	Proper students' orientation on academic culture.	3.85 +	3.41 +	3.63
3	Employment of efficient and effective academic staff.	3.72 +	3.10 +	3.41
4	Admission of high quality students.	3.96 +	3.71 +	3.84
5	Provision of adequate funds for education.	3.55 +	3.10 +	3.33
6	Seminars on the dangers of examination malfeasance.	3.44 +	3.76 +	3.60
7	Enforcement of law against examination malfeasance.	3.76 +	2.05 -	2.91
	Grand Mean	3.64	3.25	3.45

+ Agree, - Disagree

Table 3: Z-test analysis of difference in views of lecturers and students on the emergent causes of examination malfeasance.

Category	N	X	SD	Z-Calculated	Z-Critical	Decision
Lecturers	1,000	2.97	1.8	0.93	1.96	Result not significant at 0.05 level of sign.
Students	2,000	2.85	1.65			

Table 4: Z-test analysis of difference of lectures and students on possible measure to address the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities.

Category	N	X	SD	Z-Calculated	Z-Critical	Decision
Lecturers	1,000	3.64	1.8	0.84	1.96	Result not significant at 0.05 level of sign.
Students	2,000	3.25	1.65			

indictment but the lecturers who teach them have severally reported cases of low turn up for lectures by students. There is no doubt therefore that many students don't attend lectures because they could have malfeasance at the back of their minds and in many cases form the bulk of those who fail examinations when the opportunity to cheat is not available.

This shows that their values of the measures are equivalent to a great extent. The implication of the above finding is that both lecturers and students feel strongly that the emergent causes of examination malfeasance can be addressed if all suggested measures are utilized.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between lectures and students on identified possible measures to address the emergent causes of examination malfeasance in Nigerian universities.

From table 4, since z-calculated value of 0.84 is less than z-critical values of 1.96 result is not significant. This shows that lecturers and students values of the identified measures were equivalents or similar to a great extent. The implication of this result is that both lecturers and students strongly feel that the emergent causes of examination malfeasance can be addressed if all suggested measures are utilized.

CONCLUSION

The 13 factors identified in the study constituted important emergent causes of the continuous existence of examination malfeasance in Nigerian Universities. Although, the lecturers and students agree on the causes so identified as well as the suggested measures to address the problem, there is need for periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the suggested areas of solutions so as to identify loopholes that could

trigger off the problem once solved and adopt improvement measures. This is very necessary so as to improve education standard as well as productivity. It will also minimize the frustrations of the good and intelligent students and give lecturers a sense of success on the job.

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