

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS EXAMINATION AND EXAMINATION ETHICS IN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, IKERE-EKITI, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Examination malpractice is a cankerworm tending to destroy the fabric of academic development in Nigeria. This paper attempted to find out the preconceptions of students towards examination and examination ethics. The samples were 1000 part three students drawn from the five different schools at the College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti. The students, with a mean age of 21.3 years, have varied subject's disciplines. Two different questionnaire instruments (E.E.Q and E.M.Q) were used to collected data. The study revealed that many students have wrong concepts of examination and examination ethics. Some students see examination as an instrument of restriction on the ladder of success, hence the need to disobey any rules or regulations that may stand between them and success. The study concluded by suggesting the need to organize talks on examination ethics and sanctions to all students, at all levels of our educational system every term or semester. Parents teachers, and all those that are involved in the teaching and examining of students learning should also abide with examination rules and regulations.

Keywords: Perception, college of education, examination, ethics

INTRODUCTION

The word "ethics" is defined in Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English (Hornby, 2000) as "system of moral principles" or "rules of conduct". Hence examination ethics can be conceived as the system of moral principles and rules guiding the conduct of an examination. A state without laws and regulations will be in disorder and confusion which can degenerate into a state of anarchy. According to Omoluabi, (1993) institutions concerned with examining of learners in specific examinations, usually design certain norms, known as the "code of conduct of examination", to ensure absolute integrity of result. In occasions where the rules are boycotted either by the teacher or learner, may lead to examination irregularities and malpractice. This pollutes the result of the students and poses a great threat to the validity and reliability to the examination results and certification (Alutu and Aluede, 2006).

Academic institutions are structured to imbibe in learner's development of morals and intellects. The activities of teaching and learning which, are the preoccupations of these institutions, are aimed to nurture students' knowledge for improvement of their communities socially, economically, scientifically and technologically. The school subjects are therefore structured to foster academic

integrity and moral standards. Schools are regarded as institutions composed of highly disciplined individuals, guided by rules and regulations. Hence at the end of students courses in the higher institutions, particularly at graduation, they are certified to have been found worthy in both character and learning.

However, the school seemed to have failed in its pursuance of moral standards. For instance, Eperokun, (1976); Okoye (1986), Famiwole (1998), Oluyeba (1998) Oladunni (1998, 2004) have discovered that processes of examination had been seriously abused. Alutu and Aluede (2006), and Ayeni (2007) asserted that evidence abound of increasing incident of examination malpractices by students in schools and colleges, which conflict with the core purpose of education - the training of the mind and character for the acquisition of practical and theoretical skills, knowledge and functional ideas for development, and search for truth. The value of examinations and reliability of what it certifies had been eroded. Results of emanations according to Oladunni (2000) are no longer true representations of the intellectual capabilities of the examinees. Omolauabi (1993) and Uzoka (1993) added that our societal value system has broken down completely and so adults and youths alike now act without moral scruples. The general emphasis in our society today is on materialism, bribery, corruption, cultism, fraud, violence, certificate racketeering and a host of other social vices (Ayeni 2007).

Several researchers, teachers, parents, students, school administrators and other stakeholders in education sector, have expressed disgust concerning this cankerworm called examination malpractice. Examination malpractice has been described as a wrong doing in an examination which involves misconduct, irregularity as a situation which is contrary to the established rules and directives to be followed in order to affect fair conduct of examination. It is an act of misdemeanour and abuse of examination malpractice. While Oluyeba and Daramola (1992) asserted that examination malpractices is an irregular behaviour exhibited by a candidate or anybody charged with the conduct of examination before, during or after the examination which contravenes the rules and regulations governing the conduct of such examination.

Various forms, modes, methods as well as causes of examination malpractices had been outlined by scholars (Eperokun, 1976; Yakubu, 1998; Duyilemi, 2003; Oladunni, 1998, 2004). Very many forms of solutions have also been prescribed in literature. But Ayeni (2007) points out that final solution to examination malpractice had not appeared to be in sight, because every move to curb cheating inevitably suggests and generates other methods to cheat. This study is an attempt at finding means to curb incidence of examination malpractices in schools. The research is interested in inquiring into examination ethics, since its violation may be a precipitate to malpractice. Principally this study investigated student's perception of examination ethics and examination malpractice. Hence the study attempts to answer the research questions:

- 1) What is the general perception of students towards examination ethics?
- 2) What is the general perception of students towards examination malpractice?

METHODOLOGY

The research design is a descriptive survey type, which examines systematically and scientifically characteristics of a current issue (examination ethics) by collecting and analyzing data collected from College of Education Students. All students in Colleges of Education in Nigeria undergoing studies leading to the award of Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) constituted the population of this study. The samples for this study consisted of one thousand (1000) Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) students randomly drawn from College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti. The students were in part III (final year class). The research was conducted at the beginning of second semester, when the students had about two months to complete their studies in the College. This particular group of students were chosen for the study in order to have a reflection of their past experiences in examination matters.

They had taken two semester examinations in part I, two in part II and one in part III in the College. The College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, has five Schools of Study; Education, Arts and Social Sciences, Pure Sciences, languages and Business and technical. 200 students (100 males 100 females) were randomly selected from each school of study; thus giving a total of 1000 samples. The subjects have varied subject's disciplines. Their ages ranged from 17 to 23 years with means age, 21.3 years. Two different questionnaires constructed by the researcher were used to collect data for the study. The first questionnaire, tagged "examination ethics questionnaire" (EEQ) consisted of 30 items. The items tried to elicit information from respondents on their awareness and perceptions of rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examination. The second questionnaire called Examination malpractice questionnaire (EMQ) contained 28 item soliciting information on students perceptions on examination malpractice and reasons that may prompt students to cheat during examinations. The items in the two instruments requested for responses on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

The validity of the instruments was judged right by 2 lecturers in counseling psychology and a colleague in measurement and evaluation discipline. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach alphas = 87.6 for EEQ and 85.2 for EMQ) were considered high enough for the research. Data Collection and Analysis The two instruments were administered simultaneously to the respondents at a predetermined lecture hall and time by the researcher with the assistance of three other colleagues. Copies of the instruments that were duly responded to were collected and compiled for statistical analysis. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to draw conclusions. A weighted mean value of 2.5 ($4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10 \div 4$), was used as the criterion cut off point. In other words, mean that was 2.5 or above is considered positive, and below is considered negative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSSION

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses of students' perception towards examination ethics. Results obtained from the analysis of students responses indicated that the perceptions of the students differ on number of issues.

For instance; majority of the students responded that they were aware of the existence of examination ethics and that students should follow strictly these examination guidelines. However only few were ready to obey the rules, because other students did not obey the rules. Only few believed that it was morally wrong to disobey examination rules.

The students would not like to be restricted by any examination rules. They opined that violation of examination ethics was a common phenomenon in Nigeria. Since "cutting corners" was the order to the day in the country, they were ready to compromise examination rules. More than average number of the students opined that examination ethics permitted students to cheat in examination provided that were not caught. Students were ready to write examination for other students. While some could allow friends to copy from their answer scripts. Few believed that assisting fellows students with favour in examination undermined examination ethics. Less than half of the students attended lectures regularly, or prepared well, in advance for their examination. Some parents were ready to buy examination question papers for their children before the day of examination. Few agreed that they sometimes gave money to the invigilator to enable them to disobey rules of examination. However, more than average number of students still believed that examination malpractices was a violation of examination ethics and that students misconducts during examination also violated examination ethics. The students would want examination ethics be enforced among students in schools.

Table 2 reveals the Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses of Students' Perceptions towards Examination Malpractice. Item 1 on the table depicted that a large number of the respondents agreed that they cheated in examinations whenever the questions were difficult. Many of the students cheated in examinations because they lacked confidence in themselves. While many were interested in cheating because they have no time to read for examination. But items 9 and 10 revealed that some students opined that only people who cheat in examinations are those who obtain high scores and that no matter how hard you read, if you don't cheat, you will fail. Again students believed that you can not pass examinations these days, in Nigeria without cheating. Hence it is necessary to cheat in competitive examinations. That is, if you don't cheat, those who do will have advantage over you.

On the other hand, some students cheated in examinations because they see their friends cheat. The students opined that cheating is encouraged since people who cheat often escape punishment. Items 11 and 21 indicated that both teachers and principals encourage their students to cheat. Students even agreed that Nigerian norms support cheating, and that invigilators cooperated while some parents do not oppose using any opportunity available for their wards to cheat. Items 27 and 28 affirmed that students cheat in examinations purposely to own a certificate or enable them further their studies.

The study found that the ever-growing malaise of examination malpractice stems from students' wrong perceptions towards examination and examination ethics. Many students have negative constructs of what learners derive from examination.

The findings of the study agreed with the assertion of Ayeni (2007) that students who engaged in examination malpractices do not perceive examination as a challenge to learning or to require skills, rather they see it as an instrument for oppression, humiliation and restriction on the ladder of success. Perhaps this accounts for a large number of students who opined that they engaged in malpractice in order to pass well and obtain high scores in internal and external examinations. A major reason for being involved in the malpractice is to acquire certificate, which is a sure ticket for securing job. Other functions of examination are irrelevant to their psyche. These findings lend credence to Kano's (1978) contention that cheating behaviour is based on the belief that a person's ability to obtain a decent job and his social-economic mobility are by and large, a function of his performance in a certain examination.

According to Kareem (2005), to succeed in examination students need to be emotionally, as well as intellectually prepared. A popular West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) jungle says, "If you fail to prepare, prepare to fail". Contrary to this truism, this study found that students did not often attend their lectures or prepare well in advance for their examinations. Rather they had lost confidence in themselves and believed that they cannot pass no matter how hard they prepare. Most unfortunately, some parents aided and abated their wards in cheating by purchasing live question papers to support them rather than urge the students to prepare thoroughly for examination. This finding is in support of Nann's (1997) position that parents and school teacher's aid examination malpractice to enable students get undeserved grades. This study like that of Alutu and Aluede (2006) found that majority of students believed that cheating is part of Nigerians' norm. Hence their involvement in examination malpractice is a matter of joining the bandwagon. In fact, indulgence in examination malpractice has the support of some parents, invigilators, teachers and principals.

School principals organize corporate cheating in their schools during external examinations. Thus turning their schools to "miracle centers" where all examinees, as a matter of compulsion, must pass; this finding is not surprising because according to Ayeni (2007) moral value has broken down completely in Nigeria. Just as parents are busy searching for easy ways to riches, their wards and children busy themselves, planning to obtain certificates at all cost. Alutu and Aluede (2006) asserted that due to breakdown in our value system, success is no longer seen as a function of hard work. Success, today, is measured by how much you can acquire certificates and good grades at school, without bothering about the process.

Many teachers who had not taught well or covered the prescribed contents had no choice than to aid their students to cheat in order to pass. The teachers wanted the students to pass, since it is seen as a measure to good teaching. The results of this study pointed to the fact that majority of students have a wrong conception about examination ethics. For instance they conceived examination ethics to include; violating examination rules at will, condoning examination misconducts, assisting friends and cheating in examinations provided you are not caught, bribing invigilators and supervisors etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a great need for a team effort to tame this social malaise that is inimical to our academic development. Organizing talks on examination ethics and sanctions, to all students, at all levels of our educational system every term or semester, is hereby suggested. Ayeni (2007) also suggested that it is necessary to make ethics of examination a subject of study at every level of schooling. It is further advised that this could be better taught through grooming students in values of study, study habits and development of study skills. Keeping the teachers, school principals, invigilators, supervisors and examining bodies' officials informed about their expected behaviours, actions, and secrecy of examination questions is highly recommended. Parents and teachers associations' meetings, could also be used to talk to parents no the advantages of abiding with examination ethics.

Table 1: Responses of students' perception towards examination ethics

Variables	\bar{X}	SD
Examination ethics means students should follow strictly examination guidelines	3.34	1.27
Students are aware of existence of examination ethics	3.25	1.80
Most students are ready to obey examination rules	1.80	1.42
I would not like to be restricted to any rules in taking examination.	3.33	1.57
There is nothing wrong if one sees the examination questions before the day of examination.	3.56	1.80
Examination ethics permits students to cheat provided they are not caught.	2.93	2.04
My friends have "I don't care attitude" to examination rules	3.45	1.88
I can write examination for another person	1.20	0.83
Some parents influence their children not to obey examination rules	2.70	1.33
I always prepare well in advance for my examinations	1.78	2.05
I enter lectures regularly in courses I offer in school	2.17	1.93
I enter examination hall with all acceptable materials, I don't need to borrow during exams	1.31	1.08
Invigilators need to do thorough supervision in examination halls.	3.33	1.66
Some parents buy examination question papers for their children	3.71	2.13
Sometimes I give the invigilators money in order to allow me cheat during examination	1.35	1.17
It is morally wrong to disobey examination guidelines	1.62	1.52
All examinees must comply with examination rules	1.83	0.98
I do not obey examination rules because other students/candidates do not obey the rules	3.52	1.48
I can allow my friends to copy from my answer script during examinations	3.50	1.63
The society now believes in 'cutting corners" hence I can compromise examination rules.	3.01	1.88
If the invigilator is liberal I can cheat	2.93	1.04
What is most important is the certificate, not how I get it, since the end justifies the means	3.23	1.08
Over crowded halls with examinees encourage cheating during examination.	2.93	1.30
Thorough supervision during examination affirms examination rules.	3.62	1.33
Examination malpractice violates examination ethics	2.76	1.58
Student's misconducts during examinations amount to violation of examination ethics	3.05	1.75
Violating of examination ethics is common, now in Nigeria	3.75	1.87
Lack of punishment of examination malpractice culprit hampers examination ethics	3.06	1.81
Assisting students with special favour in examinations, undermines examination ethics	1.98	0.85
Examination ethics should be enforced among students in schools	3.37	1.52

Source: Survey 2009

Table 2: Responses of Student's Perceptions towards Examination Malpractices

Variables	X	SD
I cheat whenever the questions are difficult.	3.52	1.77
I cheat in examination due to lack of confidence in myself	3.47	1.52
I don't have enough time to read for examination hence the interest in cheating.	3.20	1.51
Cheating in Examination makes me feel guilty	2.77	0.94
I do not feel guilty to cheat in the exam whenever the teacher fails to teach well	3.01	0.94
I cheat because my friends cheat in examination	2.53	1.67
Cheating is encouraging, since many people who cheat often escape punishment	3.01	1.23
Cheating is not necessary if one has read well before examination	3.44	1.56
No matter how hard you read, if you don't cheat, you will fail	1.87	0.78
Only people that cheat, have high scores in internal and external examinations	1.92	1.14
Some teachers encourage cheating during examination	2.76	1.05
Parents encourage their children to cheat	1.36	0.76
Cheating is necessary in competitive examinations in order to qualify for job opportunity	3.67	1.75
You cannot pass examinations, these days, in Nigeria without cheating	2.7	1.27
The Nigerian norm encourages cheating in examinations	2.66	0.89
It is difficult to stop cheating in examination in schools	3.03	1.62
Cheating is alright is difficult examination with large failures, e.g. mathematics subject	3.47	1.08
If I do not cheat those who do will have advantage over me	3.07	1.13
I do not believe I can pass without people assisting me	1.82	0.93
Some teachers help student to pass	2.47	0.85
Some principals arrange for cooperate cheating in their schools	2.00	0.97
My parents do not oppose using any opportunity I have to cheat	1.23	1.46
It is good to arrange to sit next to someone in order to copy from his/her paper	1.23	1.46
If I do not cheat in the examination it is difficult for me to pass well	3.01	1.16
I was encouraged to cheat in examination because the invigilator cooperated	2.75	1.88
Cheating in examination was introduced to me by a typist who sold question paper for me	1.05	0.77
I intend to further my studies in tertiary institution; hence I need to cheat to pass examination	3.81	1.25
Since I need a certificate, it does not matter how I get it, cheating inclusive	3.41	1.70

Source: Survey 2009

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